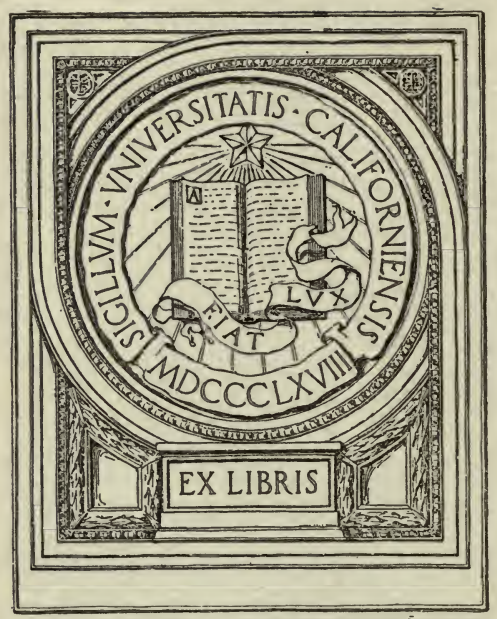
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WITH THE ITALIANS IN TRIPOLI

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HIS MAJESTY VICTOR EMMANUEL III., KING OF ITALY

[*Frontispiece*

WITH THE ITALIANS IN TRIPOLI

THE AUTHENTIC HISTORY OF THE TURCO-ITALIAN WAR

BY CHEVALIER TULLIO IRACE

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1912

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TO

THE ITALIAN FLAG

INFAMOUSLY CALUMNIATED BUT BLAMELESS

AND VICTORIOUS

TO THE SACRED MEMORY

OF THE ITALIAN MARTYRS WHO FELL VICTIMS

THIS BOOK IS DEVOTEDLY DEDICATED

448954

PREFACE

WHAT was expected has happened; the inevitable has come to pass! Italy felt compelled by considerations of national dignity to occupy Tripoli, to bring the two Turkish provinces in Africa under her absolute sovereignty. The Ottoman Government had never properly realised Italy's attitude. Turkey's political blindness was founded on two illusions: firstly, that Italy would never come to the point of facing the Tripoli problem, and secondly that, even if she attempted to do so, the Great Powers would never give Italy a free hand in the matter. These initial blunders have caused Turkey the loss of Tripoli and Cyrenaica. The treaty between England and France of 1898–9 did not suffice to warn Turkey of the danger she was running of losing her two last African Provinces, nor did later the understanding of Italy with the French and British Governments serve as a warning to the Ottoman Government.

The perseverance with which for the last ten years the Italian Foreign Office has endeavoured to create a more influential position in Tripoli and to extend her interests did not succeed any better with the Young Turkish Party than it had succeeded under the Old Régime under Abdul-Hamid. The Ottoman Government remained obdurate and unconvinced, and continued hopelessly its course of maladministration, both civil and political, in the disputed territory.

Matters in Tripoli were going from bad to worse. During the last few years misery has been rampant, anarchy has reigned supreme, the prestige of the Turkish Government has been actually reduced to a myth. Hence the two Turkish Provinces of Africa were languishing both economically and politically. With the Morocco question practically settled, Tripoli remained the only country in the Mediterranean in a semi-barbarous condition. Even the uncomplaining, fatalistic Arabs bitterly resented the neglect and utter stagnation into which Turkey had allowed the country to relapse. Turkey was her own enemy, and seemed imprudently to do everything in her power to diminish and reduce her prestige in Tripoli and, as it were, to bring

about the inevitable collapse of her domination in Africa. We all know that Tripoli was first brought into civilisation by the Romans, but this civilisation was destroyed by the Arabs and by the Turks; the innumerable ruins of buildings, palaces, and aqueducts yet bear witness to this fact. The Turks have done nothing but devastate, and there is not to-day a single Turkish province which was not much more prosperous before the advent of the Turks. In fact, the whole Turkish history is nothing but an orgy of assassinations, robbery, misgovernment, and general destruction.

During the last four years the Young Turks have been in power assassinations, massacres, robberies, and misgovernment have continued to the same extent as before. The world owes to the Turks nothing but distress. To Italy the world owes to a great extent its present civilisation. Was it not the Italians at Lepanto who first checked the Turkish advance upon Europe? So little interest and responsibility did the Turks have in their Tripolitan subjects that the authorities never even caused a Census roll to be taken; and thus this country, in the heart of Mediterranean civilisation, was a region

abandoned to ignorance, misery, and barbarity. Regions which in the past had been famous for their fertility and prosperity were laid bare and left to rack and ruin. Even the tillers of the soil preferred to destroy their olive groves rather than cultivate them under the extortionate conditions imposed upon them by the rapacity of the Turks. And so the prolific crops of Tripoli had become merely a memory. Pliny tells us that an ear of corn from Biracio—to the west of Tripoli—which was presented to the Emperor Augustus, contained 400 grains; and, further, that to Nero was presented an ear of corn from Cyrenaica containing 340 grains. The red soil of Cyrenaica is so wonderfully fertile and bountiful that, if it were properly cultivated, the ripened crops could be gathered in twice a year. The mere fact of holding a territory is not sufficient in itself to justify its retention: the justification for retaining it depends upon the wise administration and continued betterment, and the development of its intrinsic and political value. Italy felt it was her duty before the world to undertake the regeneration of Tripoli, and to that end she has been waiting and preparing silently and patiently for years.

The moment came, and all Europe knew that Italy had resolved to annex Tripoli. In fact, things had so matured that, had she deferred the occupation of Tripoli any longer, the Powers would have been at a loss to understand her policy. The most eloquent proof of their acquiescence was the fact that not one Government of Europe attempted to oppose Italy in her undertaking; on the contrary, all the Cabinets hastened to declare their absolute neutrality; and from more than one direction Turkey was advised to accept the inevitable and thus avoid a war, ceding to Italy for a financial consideration the two provinces under dispute, as had already been done in 1908, when Turkey handed over to Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The occupation by Italy of Tripoli was thus virtually accepted by Europe.

The Italo-Turkish War might have been avoided had Turkey facilitated, rather than obstructed, the way of Italy's peaceful penetration into Tripolitania. A brief *résumé* of the principal Turkish affronts to Italy will give an idea of the way Turkey actually forced the war upon her. The Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marquis di San Giuliano, before notifying the "ultimatum"

to Turkey, September 11, 1911, sent the following report to the diplomatic representatives of Italy abroad; the circular forms a summary of the injuries inflicted by the Turks upon Italian citizens in the Ottoman Empire during the last few years. In this official document, which will go down to posterity, we read:

"Oppressed Italian Subjects

"For a very long period Italians domiciled in every part of the Ottoman Empire have been addressing complaints to the Home Government, claiming protection and justice from oppressions and unfair treatment to which they were being subjected by the Turks. At first, and, indeed, for a long time, the Turks, when officially brought to book, wriggled out of the difficulties by denying the impeachment or by absolutely refusing to trouble to investigate, according to justice, the several cases of the Italian subjects, *Giustiniani*, *Kulm*, *Crittoni*, *Marcopoli*, *Sola*, etc., all creditors either of the Turkish Government or of members of the Ottoman Imperial family. For instance, the Italian firm of *Stagni*, owing to the persistent hostility of the Turkish authorities, was compelled to relinquish the concessions they had obtained from Turkey for the cutting of timber in the Province of Brussa. In 1909, during the massacre of Christians at Adana, in Asia Minor, many

Italians suffered and endured the greatest hardships. The offices of the *Navigazione Generale Italiana* were entered and pillaged at Santi Quaranta. The members of the Italian Consulates were more than once actually insulted and molested. With the advent of the régime of the Young Turks, on whom so many hopes were centred in Italy, the deplorable incidents seemed to multiply, and became more unbearable and intolerable. A very grave incident occurred quite recently. Giulia Franzoni, aged sixteen, the daughter of respectable Italian working people employed on the Turkish Railway Works at Adana, was abducted, hidden away, converted by violence to Islamism, and married by force to a Turkish subject, in spite of all the efforts of her parents to secure her release, and notwithstanding the violent protests of the foreign residents and the intervention of the Italian Consulate; and finally, in spite of the expostulations of the Italian Ambassador at Constantinople. This incident had for all nations a grave importance, but above all for Italy, who has such large numbers of settlers working on the railways in Asia Minor. This fact is also worth dwelling upon, were it only because it contained the germs of international trouble in the future.

"Piracy in the Red Sea

"The most hostile acts, however, towards Italy by the Turkish authorities have taken place in

the Red Sea, and especially in Tripolitania, where the principal Italian interests were at stake.

"It would be too long to enumerate the list of affronts and crimes against the Italian flag. I will only cite a few of the offences which have occurred since the Government of the Young Turks came into power.

"June 5, 1909, the crew of the Turkish gunboat *Nurahad* boarded the Italian s.s. *Selima*, 25 miles from the coast of Turkey, and took possession of all the specie; an act of piracy without parallel. Again, a few weeks later, the Italian s.s. *Genova* was seized by a Turkish gunboat at Hodeida and the crew subjected to most iniquitous treatment.

"December 12, 1910, while negotiations were still proceeding between the two Governments in connection with the *Genova* incident, the commander of a Turkish gunboat boarded, with an armed party, the Italian steamer which was carrying out the postal services between Avaba and Massowah (Eritrea), obliging the captain to hand over the mails.

"Other overbearing and arbitrary acts of much gravity were committed upon other mercantile ships belonging to the Italian firms of Ali Kozem and Kalid Hamed, of Massowah.

"August 21, 1911, a Turkish sailing vessel, *Fath-es-Salam*, laden with a cargo from Eritrea, was boarded and overhauled by the Turkish authorities on the Arabian coast. The captain

was flogged and subsequently thrown into the sea, the cargo being seized, and even the food-supplies of the crew being appropriated. The merchants of Eritrea, alarmed and discouraged by the constant threats and the many dangers menacing them, found themselves obliged to relinquish all commercial intercourse along the coast of Arabia, in spite of the great financial loss it meant to them.

"HOSTILITIES IN TRIPOLITANIA

"In Tripolitania, the systematic hostility of the Turkish authorities, at times openly violent and always with an under-current of bitter enmity, assumed still greater proportions. Their chief aims were to oppose the economical and commercial interests of Italy and in every way to interfere with the development of Italian influence. For instance, the 'Banco di Roma' founded with Italian capital a branch in Tripoli, a work of great economic progress and commercial enlightenment and benefit for the country. The Turkish authorities forbade the inhabitants to have any dealings or intercourse with this banking house, and punished severely any one disregarding this arbitrary command.

"The Vali, or Governors, were being constantly changed in the Vilayet of Tripoli, but the Government's policy remained unaltered. Finally, in 1910, the new Governor, Ibrahim Pasha, openly declared to the Council of Administration of Tripoli

that he intended to offer systematic and irresistible opposition to every Italian enterprise; clearly impressing upon the people that he had received those instructions from Constantinople.

"Thus, every suggestion, every undertaking, all demands for concessions, such as waterworks, telegraphic installations, sawmills, road-making, and improvements in the harbour of Tripoli were all invariably rejected. The Governor even went so far as to prohibit the Italians from acquiring land. At Homs, Derna, Benghazi, the inhabitants who were desirous of selling their land were menaced and prosecuted by the Turkish authorities.

"In spite of the formal promises made to the Italian Archæological and Mineralogical Societies, all sorts of difficulties and obstructions were used to hinder the progress of the Mineralogic Mission from Milan, headed by the Marquis Sforza. The difficulties increased to such proportions that the inhabitants finally dared not avail themselves of the beneficent works instituted by the Italians, for fear of being oppressed and persecuted by the local authorities.

"Murder of Italian Subjects

"Many other grave symptomatic events then took place, notably the assassination of Father Giustino at Derna and the callous murder of the Italian journalist, Gastone Terreni, at Homs

crimes for which no redress could be obtained from the Turkish authorities, although every diplomatic means was resorted to in order to obtain some sort of compensation for the families of the two Italian citizens.

"These two murders, caused undoubtedly by the bitter hatred of the Turks for the Italians, threw consternation and terror in the hearts and minds of the numerous Italian settlers on the coast of Tripolitania. Every step taken by the Italian Consuls to obtain justice was openly opposed by the Turkish authorities. Every protest was in vain, as was fully demonstrated when the well-known Italian journalist, Arbib, was arrested without any motive at Tripoli, and savagely beaten by the police, in spite of the personal intervention of the *dragoman*[1] of the Italian Consulate—this in itself constituting a flagrant violation of International Capitulations.

"The official organ of the Governor of Tripoli, the *Marsad*, was ever full of insults and abuse towards Italy, thus conclusively showing that she found herself in Tripoli faced by bitter prejudice and violent enmity.

"Italy's Forbearance

"The sincere and universal sympathy with which Italy greeted the coming into power of the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress, the keen

[1] Dragoman = the native guard and interpreter at Consulates.

desire she had to give time for the New Régime to establish itself, the desire not to create difficulties to the Ottoman Empire in Europe, counselled Italy to such patience and moderation as has never before been exemplified in the history of nations. Hopes were centred in the consolidation and strengthening of the new Turkish Government which had come to power with such a wonderfully roseate programme of reforms and improvements. Unfortunately, things did not improve: on the contrary, affairs rapidly went from bad to worse. The Government of Constantinople, which had given with its advent so many mellifluous promises, failed to act accordingly in every single case, showing conclusively its utter weakness and want of authority, to the extent of failing to obtain obedience from its own representatives in Tripoli; in other words, a Government too feeble and lacking in energy to obtain the due respect for treaties which it had itself contracted, thus failing in its promises to Italy, as well as failing to keep innumerable international treaties.

"As we have said, the extraordinary series of incidents and daily provocations continued to increase, Turkey following her usual course of procrastinations, and finally rousing public opinion and the press, Parliament and the Government in Italy to the enormity of the situation. The Italian Ambassador at Constantinople made representations about the state of affairs to the Porte—

all in vain. Thus, having lost all hope of settling in an amicable way the various outstanding disputes between the two countries, owing to Turkey's feeble policy and usual dilatory procrastination, Italy decided to have recourse to arms, to obtain thus, by force, the respect and consideration which she was unable to procure otherwise, and to vindicate her legitimate rights.

"Turkey's breach of international law had given Italy ample cause for bitter resentment, while Italy's forbearance during the last few years warranted energetic action when the psychological moment came. Had she not acted thus, her self-respect and prestige would have been irreparably compromised in the eyes of the world.

"Thus the entire blame for the Italo-Turkish War rests upon the Ottoman Government, as Italy, only when constrained by events, was forced to take action against Turkey."

T. I.

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[1] From the diary of a witness on board an Italian man-of-war.

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[1] Generally taken from the diaries of persons who followed the troops in the military operations.

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NOTE

THE records of the war in Tripoli, which have hitherto reached this country, have been to a great extent of a misleading and inaccurate nature. No newspaper correspondents were allowed free access to all the operations, and much of the news that was sent home had to be obtained from second or third hand. It is, therefore, not to be trusted.

Chevalier Irace, in his desire to give the British public a true and accurate account of what occurred, has extracted from the diaries of witnesses who followed the naval and military operations at the front the incidents here recorded. He has also had the great advantage of using special information provided to the leading Italian newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera* of Milan. His book may, therefore, be relied on as the most authentic and authoritative account of the war which has hitherto appeared. It is at present only being published in English, as

it is especially desired that the English-speaking public should, before all else, be in possession of the true facts of the case. The Author's share from the sale of this book will be devoted to the relief of indigent families of soldiers and sailors who lost their lives in this war.

LETTER TO THE AUTHOR

Rome, *July* 16, 1912.

Dear Irace,

Having been informed of your proposed publication of a book on the Italian-Turkish War, allow me to express my entire approval of your purpose, and to communicate to you my views, which I shall be glad to have brought to the notice of the noble British nation.

The necessity incumbent on governments and military commanders of safeguarding operations, so as to prevent the dissemination of indiscreet or inaccurate news, which might be advantageous to the enemy, has been the cause of necessary restrictions towards correspondents of papers sent to follow the operations in the Italian-Turkish War.

But, if it has been necessary for the commanding officer to maintain the secrecy of his military plans, yet, in view of the public desire to have daily news from the front, it is not less true that the maintaining of this secrecy is, and has been, attended with grave inconvenience.

For, owing to lack of precise information accessible to journalists kept at a distance or in the dark, the reins of fancy are loosened, and every one's imagination spreads abroad news devoid of probability, but with all the leanings of a partisan.

We must also take into account the paid partisans of one of the belligerents, political and secret agents of one of the adversaries, whose especial task it is to embarrass and defame the other combatant.

In a colonial war, in which various tendencies, partialities, apprehensions, and aspirations of various races and states are called into play, the danger from these dishonest machinations is all the greater. And in this Italian-Turkish War, while on the one hand there has been a prudent reticence on the part of the serious newspapers of every country, there has been an enraged outburst of correspondence and of news devoid of all foundation and justification, giving rise to pessimistic accusations and gloomy accounts of Italian doings. Indeed, these have misled the world to the detriment of Italy.

A book refuting the base campaign of lying misstatements conducted against Italy was therefore called for.

To your initiative and pertinacity, dear Irace, the execution thereof is due. Basing your state-

ments upon reliable sources, obtaining your information from those who were on the spot, relying upon the impartial witness of those who took part in the events, obtaining your details from honest and disinterested eye-witnesses on the battle-fields of Tripoli and in Cyrenaica, your book has filled a gap and removed any doubts that may have arisen as to the honourable behaviour of the Italian Army. It is praiseworthy of you, as a citizen of Italy, thus to defend your nation in the face of all men.

Your publication is a reliable and accredited page of the great book of contemporaneous history. May the noble sons of England, whom we of Italy cannot do other than term our friends, read it and reflect upon it. And, convinced though we are that they lend no ear to the calumnies spread against the men and minds of Italy, we rejoice to think that this book will greatly contribute to confirm them in their faith in Italy's mission of civilisation, the legacy of a glorious past, under the auspices of which a continual ascendency of influence and progress is assured.

Yours affectionately,

VITTORIO COTTAFAVI.

BOOK I

WITH THE ITALIAN NAVY

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CHAPTER I

ON THE EVE OF WAR

Ecco il giorno, ecco il giorno della prora
e dell' aratro, il giorno dello sprone
e del vomere. O Italiani, ecco l'ora.
G. D'Annunzio,[1] *Canzone d'Oltremare.*

(Now dawns the day, the day of sea-borne prow
and plough land-borne, of plough-share and ship's-beak.
Arise, O Italy, thine hour is now!)

Since September 28, 1911, the day on which the "ultimatum" was handed to the Turkish Government, we had been sailing with the Second Naval Division between Malta and Tripoli, ready to bear down on the latter place if the Turkish and Mussulman fanatics of the town should attack our fellow-countrymen or the many other Europeans in residence there. During the night of the 28th we sighted a steamer going at ten miles an hour, which, trying to escape our notice, was making for Tripoli. It was the Turkish transport *Derna*, carrying arms and ammunition for the Tripolitan garrison. The searchlights of the battleship *Napoli* threw a bright light all over

[1] Gabriele D'Annunzio is one of the greatest living poets. At the beginning of the war he went to Tripoli, where he was inspired to write verses which are perhaps the most sublime he has ever penned.

the transport vessel, and plain at her mast-head stood out the name *Eitel Friedrich*, a sham German title which the Turkish ship had assumed. Though we knew well enough that she was the *Derna* and that her capture presented no difficulty, we nevertheless let her go on unmolested, as we had received definite orders from headquarters to see that she entered the harbour of Tripoli, because the landing of arms by her after the "ultimatum" would constitute that *casus belli* which gave Italy the right to commence hostilities. Our ship meanwhile was putting the finishing touches to her "war-paint." On the night of September 30 the alarm was suddenly sounded, and from the quarter-deck descended the order to hoist the battle-flag. The alarm-bell at once aroused the crew, and all hands eagerly hastened to their posts. A square was formed aft. The Commanding Officer opened the case containing the battle flag, and, after kissing the sacred banner, entrusted it to be hoisted to the two junior midshipmen. As the flag waved proudly in the breeze, the crew, drawn up in four lines, shouted the salute. At the distance of a mile from the harbour of Tripoli we brought to. It was a pitch-dark night, and hearts on board were beating high in imminent expectation of a fight. As for myself, I received orders to investigate the interior of the

H.E. ADMIRAL LEONARDI-CATTOLICA

Italian Minister for the Navy, to whom the great efficiency of the Italian Fleet is largely due.

harbour, and above all to make quite sure by personal observation that the transport *Derna* was there. A boat was at once launched, and by the left channel we rowed into port. There we found only five vessels, two of which were the Turkish guardship, an old hulk, half water-logged, and the steamer *Eitel Friedrich*, otherwise the *Derna*. Our little boat steered round them all; we made a close examination of the spacious roadstead and then returned. In case of danger I was to have sent up a red rocket—the signal fixed upon for demanding help.

At dawn a steamer hailing from Tripoli brought two dispatches for the Admiral, from the Italian Consul there. One of them contained the information that the Turkish steamer *Derna*, sailing under a false name and flying the German flag, had been landing since midnight a large quantity of arms and ammunition, which were being freely distributed amongst the inhabitants of Tripoli and the Arabs of the surrounding villages and oases: that, moreover, the Moslem populace was in a state of great excitement, and that there were fears of a massacre of the Europeans. This serious news was at once communicated to the commanding officers of the Fleet, and it was decided to make a naval demonstration in order to cool down the ardour of the Turks

and Arabs, each vessel hoisting her flag of battle.

At 7 o'clock on the morning of October 1 the ships, fifteen in number, drew up in single file within range of the Turkish forts, ready to dismantle them at the first sign of hostilities, and lying off the roadstead for several hours. At 10 a.m. the Rear-Admiral ordered me to effect a landing at the harbour and carry to the Italian Consul instructions to embark on two torpedo-boats all the Italian residents and such foreigners as desired to leave, as well as to give notice of the outbreak of hostilities to the Turkish Commander and the Consuls of the other Powers. On reaching land my first act was to pay the customary call on the Commander of the Turkish guardship, a short, stout man of about fifty, dressed partly in civilian and partly in naval attire. I was received with military honours. In the afternoon the Italian residents began to embark. It was a melancholy sight—that throng of frightened women, old men and children, who cast glances of suspicion around them, as though they feared treachery and were beset by some unknown but ever-present danger. One aged woman was carried on a stretcher, that she might end her days in the land where she was born.

The dragoman of the Italian Consulate accom-

panied the band of fugitives, who were the object of hostile demonstrations from the native crowd. At first the Arab boatmen refused to take them on board, but gave way eventually to liberal offers of payment, and for several hours there was a long procession of boats crowded with Europeans going backwards and forwards from the quays to the torpedo-boats. Last to go on board was the Italian Consul, Cav. Galli, who had shortly before notified to his colleagues of the other Powers the impending outbreak of hostilities. The torpedo-boats, loaded with refugees and protected by the white flag, left the harbour and made in the direction of the Italian squadron, which was cruising ten miles away in the offing, ready for battle. By this time the Turkish forts also, with their ramparts yellow as the desert, half hidden amongst the dense growths of slender palms, had hoisted their red battle-flag, and their sentries could be seen standing motionless behind the battlements. A crowd of Turkish soldiers watched the scene from the upper part of the Castle where the Vali resides, and groups of terrified inhabitants could be seen flying towards the interior loaded with packages and children. Places of business and all windows had been quickly closed; hundreds of houses had been stripped of their contents, and the streets wore

a deserted look. A sudden panic had swept the inhabitants clean out of sight. On the terraces of the houses not a creature was visible, save on that of the Italian Consulate, where there was a group of journalists.

Over the white city slowly the night came down, and the only sign of life was the quivering of the flags of all the nations that flew from the various consulates and the houses belonging to Europeans. Seawards a flock of frightened craft were putting out into the open, white sails that waited to spread their wings to the first light breeze. A Greek steamboat, eager to be off, kept desperately sounding her siren's dismal note, summoning some one left on shore. The Turkish stationary gunboat, of antiquated build, lay awaiting her doom so resignedly, that she had not even taken down the awnings at her stern. From our hurricane-deck the muezzins could be seen on the tiny balconies of the minarets, uttering, as they stooped over the silent, abandoned city, their time-honoured call to evening prayer. On the terrace of the Italian Consulate a dozen of our countrymen were waving the tricolour, bidding us God-speed; we dipped our flag in answer. Then, steaming straight ahead, we stood out for the open sea and soon rejoined the squadron. That same evening we

H.R.H. THE DUKE OF THE ABRUZZI

Commander of a squadron of torpedo-boats in the Ionian Sea. H.R.H. had already distinguished himself in leading an expedition to the North Pole in 1899, and up the Mount Ruwenzori (16,815 feet), which he was the first man to ascend.

learned to our delight, that off the Turkish port of Prevesa, in the Ionian Sea, the squadron of torpedo-boats, commanded by H.R.H. the Duke of the Abruzzi, had on September 29 engaged a group of Turkish destroyers, sinking three and scattering the rest. These Turkish vessels were under orders to harass the southern coasts of Italy and Italian transports on their way to Augusta in Sicily, where the troops of the expeditionary force were being concentrated.

CHAPTER II

THE BOMBARDMENT OF TRIPOLI

E il Mar Mediterraneo, che vaglia
le stirpi alla potenza ed alla gloria,
in ogni flutto freme la battaglia.
G. D'Annunzio, *La canzone del Sacramento.*

(Lo, 'tis the Land-locked Sea, that winnows out
the nations, with stern sieve, to fame and power:
in every billow throbs the battle-shout.)

The first act of hostility carried out by our squadron before Tripoli was the demand for surrender made by Admiral Faravelli on October 2. To this demand the Turkish Commander replied by requesting a delay of twenty-four hours in order to ask for instructions from Constantinople. As all telegraphic communication with Tripoli had been cut off since the morning of the 30th, the Turkish Commander was authorised to make use of the telegraph apparatus of the Italian fleet: and, as he subsequently refused to surrender the place, and the rights of neutrals remaining there had been sufficiently safeguarded by the Italian authorities, it was now the cannon's turn to speak.

The forts to be attacked were six. From the

town a high cliff, which had been strengthened by thick walls, ran out into the sea, and on the summit of this cliff stood a battery known as the "Lighthouse Battery," because the lantern tower actually stood on its ramparts. This fortress was armed with four heavy siege-guns. Lower down, towards the east, stood the "Red Fort," so called from the colour it was painted. In this were ten guns of varying calibre. Outside the town were batteries mounted on emplacements. The "Hamidié Fort" to the east had two heavy guns and two 8-inch howitzers. To the west, again, were three other forts, known as the "Gargaresch Forts," with batteries of 8-inch guns. The Italian battleships *Garibaldi* and *Ferruccio* were entrusted with the task of bombarding Fort Hamidié; the *Brin* and *Saint Bon* in the centre of the line were to attack the Red Fort and the Lighthouse Fort, whilst the *Sardegna*, *Sicilia*, and *Re Umberto* were told off to fire on the Gargaresch Forts to the west of the town. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of October 3 rang out the signal to "Stand by!" There was a rush of gunners to the guns, of carriers to the ammunition rooms, of signalmen to the speaking-tubes; and in one minute every man was ready at his post. At each masthead was run up the jaunty little war-pennon; portholes were closed with a bang; and ammunition

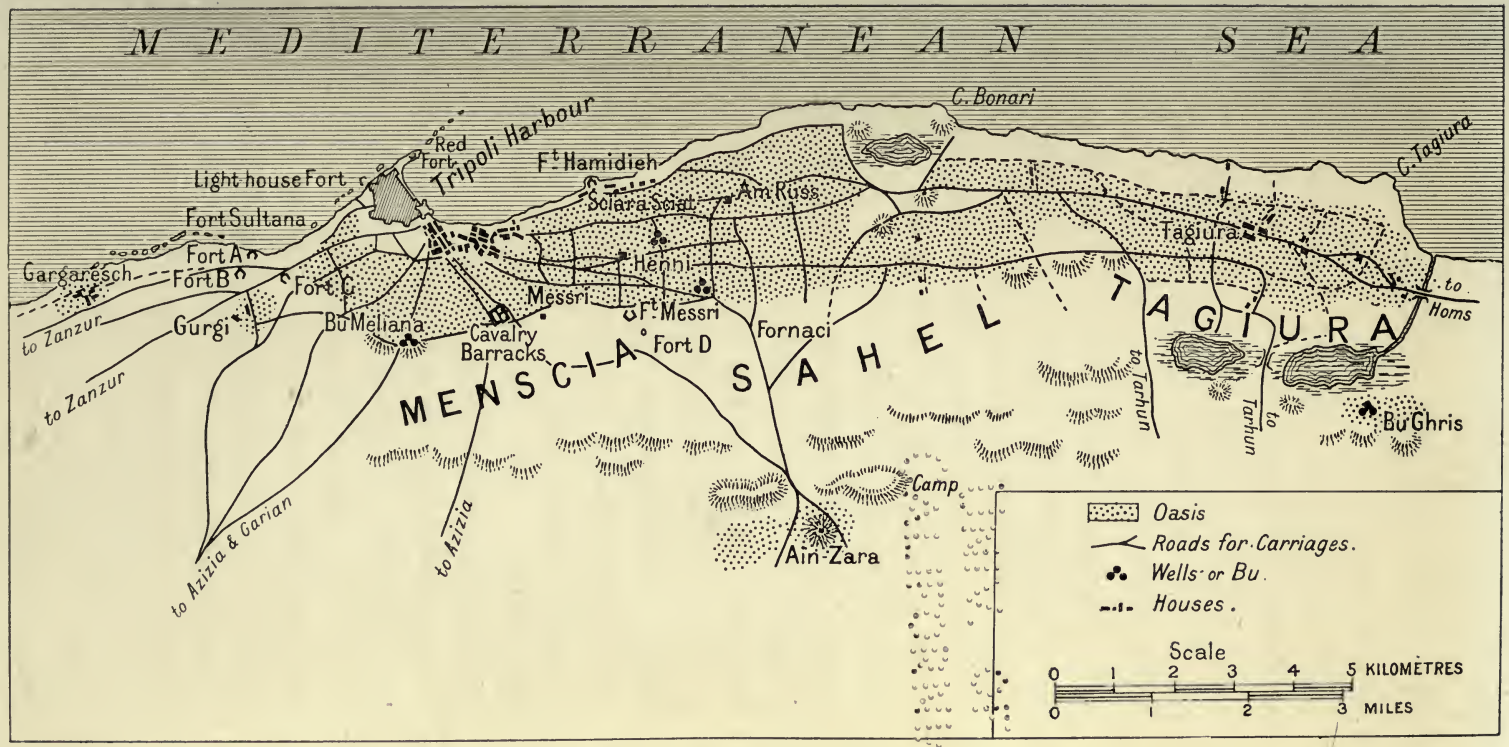
lifts began raising to the batteries the white shells tipped with red, which were placed in line behind the guns. The order maintained was magnificent. In perfect silence the men waited for the signal to fire.

From information received it was known that the Turks' artillery had a maximum range of nearly 10,000 yards. At 3.15 a thunderous boom rent the air. The *Benedetto Brin* had fired the first shot at the Red Fort. This first shot was the expected signal. I urged my gunners to be calm and take good aim. An instant afterwards a crash of gunshots boomed across the sea in clouds of white smoke which the wind quickly dispersed. The Turks were ready for the attack, and began to fire on us from all the forts. With perfect coolness we watched the effects of the enemy's shots; they were badly aimed and fell short. We saw them fall into the sea, raising columns of water mountains high, which slowly sank again in light, feathery spray. My men greeted the enemy's first shots with loud, scornful laughter. I shouted to them that brave sailors should always respect a foe who is fighting honourably for his country, even when of inferior ability and strength; and these words at once restored silence and discipline among those thoughtless lads. We fired by batteries, ten rounds at a time. Hot blasts of air passed rolling

overhead, and amid the choking, yellow smoke a shower of black detritus covered and begrimed us at each discharge. After about two hours' firing the Hamidié Fort ceased to reply, but the Lighthouse Battery and the others at Gargaresch still kept up their unavailing defence. To silence them the ironclads brought their huge 12-inch guns into action. The Red Fort and the Lighthouse Battery were for some time wrapped in wreaths of fire and smoke. When the wind cleared the air we saw the Red Fort demolished and completely gutted, whilst the Lighthouse Battery had vanished as if by magic, annihilated by the terrific explosion of the big Italian shells. The Turkish resistance was at an end. Yet the bombardment went on till evening to complete the destruction of the defence works on which guns still appeared.

On the morning of October 4 our ships resumed the bombardment of the Turkish forts to effect their final demolition, and also to level to the ground a strong tower that contained machinery for firing torpedoes. We were aware that a chain of mines had been laid by the Turks round Tripoli in 1886 after the French occupation of Tunis, and it was thought that they had never been removed. Mines set so long ago were not particularly formidable, but it was deemed prudent to guard against any surprise. Subjected to a wonderfully accurate

fire, it was not long before the tower blew up with a terrific explosion and a furious blaze of fire and yellow smoke which stained the splendour of the clear blue sky. Meanwhile, the Gargaresch Forts and the land batteries behind the town had also been reduced to silence. Then a steam launch was dispatched from the *Garibaldi*, and with a few men I was sent ashore to reconnoitre under cover of the guns of our ship, which landed a shot every five minutes. We had to force our way to the beach. There we clambered up the steep side of the quay just opposite Fort Hamidié, and, climbing its outer bastions, made our way inside. Here all was chaos and confusion : the enemy's artillery, rendered completely useless, consisted of excellent Krupp guns of quite recent date and great power, which the Turks had handled badly, not a single one of our ships being struck. A great quantity of shells and ammunition still lay in the magazines. As the Hamidié Fort was surrounded by a dangerously thick grove of palm trees which might render surprises from the land side easy, I decided to fire it with its own stores. An hour had not elapsed before a terrific explosion shook the earth and sea; the war material of Fort Hamidié had been blown up. A black column of smoke and dust, hundreds of yards high, sprang into the air, and for miles around the sky was darkened. The devastating cloud



MAP OF THE OASIS OF TRIPOLI

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formed a mass shaped like a pine tree, such as hangs over a volcano, and, swept by the wind, settled down over the sea, completely hiding the town two miles away. Tripoli vanished in that stifling simoom.

The vigorous Italian bombardment had cowed not only the townspeople, but also the Turkish soldiers and officers of the garrison. From the upper deck of our ship two long columns of people could be distinguished moving into the open country southward and westward of the town, towards the mountains of Garian, which bound the horizon at a distance of about thirty miles. They were the Turkish Regulars in full retreat. This retreat was a complete split-up of the army along the great caravan routes that start from Tripoli. General Munir Pasha with Colonel Kiemal Bey, Head of the Staff and the Officer Commanding the Artillery, had thought fit to abandon the city to its fate rather than attempt a desperate resistance to the Italian landing. Perhaps they had been counting on the help, constantly promised but never sent, from Constantinople, and also on the co-operation of the Arabs, who had been stirred up against the Italians by means of infamous lies, and amongst whom rifles and ammunition in large quantities had been distributed. A Turkish soldier, whom we found wounded near Fort Hamidié, told me that of his company, which

was to have defended the city on the east, first the captain, and then the lieutenant and two sergeants had fled ; and so, while the Italian sailors were preparing for the landing, the Turkish soldiers had taken to flight in all directions.

During the bombardment we had taken the greatest care not to hit the town, and, in point of fact, the number of shells that struck the houses, even nearest to the forts, was very small. On our side there were no casualties. The Turks lost a hundred men or so, and all their batteries were put out of action.

As the city had been abandoned, the Commanders of the battleships, meeting in council, decided to land a force of sailors to occupy it and also to keep under control the fanatical Arabs, who, being well supplied with arms and ammunition, might give way to looting and other excesses against the Europeans. And so, at dawn on October 5, the Italian warships steamed in towards the shore opposite the forts of Gargaresch, and from them several boats and steam launches put off, laden with armed sailors, cases of ammunition, and quick-firing guns. On reaching shore, the sailors at once occupied the Sultania Fort, where they hoisted the first Italian flag to the thunder of a joyous salute from the entire Fleet. This was the first capture on the soil of Tripoli, the first step towards

its conquest. On that sunny morning the city was gay with foreign bunting, as for a festival. The minaret of the great Turgut Mosque sparkled with mosaics, and a throng of Arabs, peaceful but inquisitive, gathered on the beach to see the Italian "white-jackets" go by. Terraces and windows, for the last three days deserted, quickly filled with Europeans waving their hats in sign of joy, and with Arabs wearing a wondering, meditative look. From the Konak a group of them came down, waving a great white flag, led by Hassuna Pasha, of the princely family of the Caramanli, the ancient Lords of Tripoli, whom the Turks had dispossessed. He had all along been a strong supporter of an Italian occupation, and his support had cost him constant persecution from the Turks. As supreme head of the Arabs of the town and neighbourhood, he was the only person with whom negotiations were possible. The men who accompanied him were chiefs of eminent Tripolitan families and leaders of tribes.

On the sea, torpedo-boats plied busily to and fro, and steam tugs towed long strings of small craft packed full of men, bristling with rifles and loaded with ammunition chests, sacks of provisions, machine guns and gun-carriages. The white ranks of our seamen began forming in close masses hard by the empty barracks on the east side of the

town, and by the Konak. The landing continued until dark and brought back life and animation to the port and town which had become so desolate and sad in the days of the bombardment. The sailors' first thought was for defence. The quick-firing Maxims and shore guns were speedily got into position on the old walls of the town, pointing towards the oasis of palms which girdles the town with its broad ring of green, three miles deep by twelve miles long. Telephone wires were rapidly laid between the forts and ships, which held themselves in readiness to support the sailors in case of attack. With a squad of my men I pushed on to reconnoitre inside the town, with results that corroborated the information previously received. The Turks had withdrawn into the oasis outside the city and had more especially concentrated their forces towards Gargaresch and in the direction of the wells at Ain-Zara, two hours' march from Tripoli. Their neighbourhood was very disquieting, for the sailors, numbering only some 2,000, were spread over a line of defence about three miles long, whereas the enemy had a strength of some 6,000 men. If, instead of running away so ignominiously, they had disputed our landing, the landing itself would have been seriously imperilled. Notwithstanding the danger, our men were intensely keen on being attached to

the advanced guard, and each tried to find some pretext for being sent to the front.

Admiral Borea Ricci d'Olmo was appointed the first Governor of Italian Tripoli, and Rear-Admiral Cagni Commander of the Forces. The former, attended by the Italian Consul, at once took possession of the Konak. Nothing could be quainter, more diversified or fantastic than this Castle, all courtyards, blind alleys, terraces, and staircases, at once formidable and picturesque. The Arabs had looted it during the previous night. Torn registers, scattered papers, broken glass, and other rubbish lay strewn confusedly about. By looting the official residences of the Turks the Arab rabble had, to a certain extent, sealed the doom of the Ottoman rule. Turkish prestige was a thing of the past. Even the "Caracol," those dreaded guard-houses of the Turkish Gendarmerie, had been sacked by them and the prisoners set free; for the Gendarmes had been the first to join the Regulars in flight!

A hitch in the landing would have meant the looting of the European houses by the emboldened predatory Arabian hordes, and the quantities of arms passing from hand to hand would have roused fears of massacre. Hence it was absolutely necessary to land men. Whilst the Governor-Admiral was taking possession of the Konak, Rear-Admiral

Cagni was being received at the Town Hall by Hassuna Pasha. Attended by a hundred Arab chieftains and the Staffs of the European Consulates, he heartily greeted the Italian Commander, and expressed the pleasure he felt in recognising the new control, merely begging for the humane treatment of his fellow-citizens. Admiral Cagni promised to take a fatherly interest in the natives, adding that any Italian soldier who transgressed his orders would be severely dealt with, while a like severity would be meted out to such Arabs as should injure his men. Hassuna's fear was explained by the report, spread by the Turks and credited by the natives, that the Italians on disembarking would massacre the men and violate the women. Perhaps the Turks themselves believed it, as massacre is no unusual thing with them, and may almost be said to enter into their system of government.

Besides securing the city from any possible assault, it was also necessary to take immediate measures for disarming the townspeople, amongst whom the Turks had distributed good rifles by the thousand, as well as abundant ammunition. A police service was immediately organised and Hassuna Pasha appointed Mayor of Tripoli. His first public proclamation took this form : "Any one delivering up rifles before midnight will receive

two thalers. Any one doing so before midday to-morrow will receive one; after which time all rifles will be confiscated." The effect of this proclamation was surprising. Such numbers of people appeared in the streets carrying rifles that one would have thought that an insurrection was on the point of breaking out. Guns, pouches crammed full of cartridges, and bayonets were piled in heaps in the Town Hall courtyard. The Arabs' only dread was lest the hour of midnight should strike all too soon and that there would not be time to collect the arms and hand over the thalers. About two thousand rifles were thus collected in a few hours, though many thousands more must have been in the Arabs' possession, as the *Derna* was known to have landed about fifty thousand.

Whilst all this was going on in the town, the sailors at the front, outside the walls, were digging trenches for defence against a possible night attack. Darkness came slowly down upon the city, where on terraces and at the windows numbers of Italian flags had appeared as if by magic.

Already Tripoli resembled an old Italian town.

CHAPTER III

SEVEN NIGHTS IN THE DESERT

I mozzi, come fossero in coverta,
stanno alla guardia della batteria
sopra il sabbione, e l'un per gioco "Allerta
a proda!" grida. E il morituro imberbe
che morderá la sabbia, i denti bianchi
ficca nel pane e nelle frutta acerbe.

G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

(The sailor-lads that late the decks were manning
now man the guns on shore. "Look out there, for'ard!"
cries one in sport, the desert sandscape scanning.
Little he recks, thus early doomed to sorrow,
now with white teeth his crust and green fruit munching,
those teeth will bite the desert dust to-morrow.)

Tired though I felt by the hot work of the day, the first night passed on the newly conquered land was a sleepless one. In the early part of the evening I inspected the line of outposts three miles from the city walls, that reached to the farthest edge of the oasis and beyond which begins the desert.

It was a glorious night, with a full moon. The black palms flung their great fans into the cloudless sky, and in the calm cold light the huge, fleshy cactus plants looked almost human, like knots of watching sentinels.

From the tangled growth of countless gardens, floated a sweet scent of flowering jasmines. Weird sounds came from the camels huddled under the walls of their compound, and a far-off barking of dogs made echo from the heart of the oasis. Ever and anon across the sky there streams a glow like lightning. It is the flash-light, some warship's watchful eye searching amidst the palms and sand-dunes for the sailors' foe. This strange, poetic scene, eloquent of the changeless East, with its drowsy sense of utter restfulness, impressed me deeply. No hint was there that behind those trunks of palm, those giant cactus thickets, those shadows that the low walls cast, hundreds of sailors were keeping watch and ward; that on all sides eyes were peering, ears listening intent. Deadened though it was by the sand, my own footfall was distinctly audible, and when a challenging voice out of the night now and again demanded "Who goes there?" my answering watchword, "Marina," opened a way for me. From behind black palm stems came a white gleam of sailors' uniforms; from one picket to another I made my way by strange winding paths unrecognisable by daylight, emerging at last from the palm grove out into the desert, hard by Bu-Meliana, where lie the wells that furnish Tripoli with water. It was not till I was close upon their

trenches, a hundred yards or so from the fertile edge of the oasis, that I saw the sailors wrapped in their camp-rugs, lying beside the breastwork of sand. Into the desert's tawny immensity sentries were gazing with fixed, questioning eyes. In the desert a sailor is at home; to him it is a second sea, and on that moonlight night the oasis' edge hard by looked strangely like a shore. Over the distant sand-dunes of the desert plain the search-lights from the ships in port cast their great moving rays of light; ships which, though far away and unseen themselves, scoured the land methodically section by section. A mounted messenger, shouting the password, draws rein, with orders from head-quarters, and then starts off again at a gallop. Slowly the hours of waiting pass. Faint wailing sounds fall on the ear from out the shadow of the oasis—a cry of starving Arabs. In those mysterious gardens of palm and orange and olive the Turks had erected a sort of refuge for the hungry. As in Morocco, and all countries where trade is bad, when any tract of the Tripolitan Hinterland is oppressed with famine, the starved inhabitants betake themselves in a body to the rich towns, and in their destitution hungrily besiege them. The Ottoman authorities of Tripoli had isolated, near the Bu-Meliana Wells, a colony of such Arabs from the famine-stricken regions of

the south, and they now lay groaning and invisible where the shade was thickest. The low, dismal wail which rose from them filled the night with sadness unspeakable.

All at once, at about 2 in the morning, a whisper runs through the sailors' ranks: "Look out! The Turks are coming!" There is a sharp metallic click of loading rifles. With bayonets ready fixed, muzzles are brought down over the breastworks of the trenches, and aim is slowly taken. All around is dead silence. In front of us, on the side of a slight rise in the ground that looks like a wave of the sea, a dark mass of men comes into view. The mass spreads out in skirmishing order, and finally forms a long dotted line of tiny shadows. In the deep stillness of the moonlit night a slight shuffling sound of steps is heard. They are upon us at the double. "Ready!" rang out my order to the men, "but don't shoot till I give the word. Aim well and fire coolly!" It was Turkish infantry, as one could tell from the order of their advance. On came the long line till it reached a solitary tree standing like an outpost of the desert vegetation, two hundred yards in front of our trenches. I shouted "Fire!" and there came a deafening rattle of shots, followed by the fitful crack of individual firing. The Turks flung themselves on

the ground and replied vigorously. Long streaks of light are flashing in the darkness far away. We hear the enemy's shots go whizzing by us; each seems to have its own peculiar sound. They whiz and roar, they sigh and buzz; now with uncanny, cat-like mew, now with low whistle, as of birds in flight; faint, penetrating sounds that reach us through all the furious din of musketry, ringing and re-echoing through space. Luckily the fire of the Turks is too high, and no one is hit. In night engagements firing is always difficult, and our own shots, as it seems, do the enemy but little harm. Anyway, they keep up a hot fusillade, nor do they give way a yard. In the thick of the fight Rear-Admiral Cagni, Commander of the Garrison, rides hastily up, springs off his horse, and enters the trenches. He estimates the enemy's force at about 1,200. It is a fierce attack, and we have only 400 men at the threatened point. Cagni gives orders to signal to the Fleet for help, and two red rockets rise into the air. This wakes the thunder of the ships' big guns, and shells sweep hurtling over the oasis to burst beyond the Turkish ranks. The ships fire with explosive shells and shrapnel, which flash and roar, leaving behind them in the murky air a long trail of smoke, luminous as a comet's tail.

To make the firing more effective and also

not to waste the cartridges, the supply of which was not over-abundant, I ordered my men to slacken fire and take careful aim, which they did. These lads of twenty summers are cool as old veterans inured to war. I hear them talking to each other between whiles in the trenches. One young Sicilian states his intention of "doing for that handful of niggers," thinking that the Turks are dark-skinned, like the Arabs. Another, a good marksman, gets riled because his rifle won't work properly, and seizes one from a cabin-boy who is not such a good shot as himself.

After half an hour's engagement the Turkish fire grows feeble, slackens, and ceases. The Turks themselves vanish, and are thought to be covertly contemplating a flank movement on our left. My company starts off at the double to stiffen the threatened point. As they run, the sailors urge one another on with shouts of "Forward, the old Garibaldi!" They are like so many schoolboys just let out from class. Another hundred sailors come running up from Tripoli—all the reserve men we have. What matter? Our men feel themselves equal to any task.

Shortly before dawn all was once more silence and calm. The Turks had again retired. On visiting the scene of action at daybreak some dead bodies of Turks were found and one man wounded.

He was an infantry-man with a brand-new khaki uniform. A bullet had gone clean through him, but his condition was not very serious, as he asked for a cigarette and began to smoke. We had three men wounded and one killed, a sailor barely eighteen years of age, shot through the forehead. He was the first Italian killed in this war. His name was Grisuglio, and he hailed from Naples, where his relations are fishermen. He was buried at the outposts in the desert at the foot of a lonely palm, and on his grave was laid a cross made of two branches from the tree—the first cross seen in the Moslem desert. In the early days of the conquest of Tripoli the advanced sentries were wont afterwards to take up their stand beside this cross.

All' ombra d'una palma, sul confine
dell' Oasi, una croce rude è fitta
in un tumolo cinto di spine.

Nome inciso non v'è, non lode inscritta:
altro segno non v'è se non l'eterno.
Sola una nudità vi splende invitta.

G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

(Where verdure ends, and where the desert bounds it,
under a palm tree's shade there stands a cross
lonely and rude; a hedge of thorns surrounds it
and forms a grave. No name to tell man's loss,
only the sign eternal: and triumphant
its nakedness shines out with radiant force.)

THE WELLS AT BU-MELIANA

Where the Italian sailors bravely did their duty until the arrival of troops from Italy

THE GRAVE OF THE FIRST ITALIAN KILLED IN THIS WAR

Not far from the Italian sailor's grave there lies an ancient "Kubba," [1] which played an important part in the bombardment and earlier battles. In order to reassure the Arabs the Turks had spread a report that "Sidi," [2] the sacred "Marabout" [3] buried in that "Kubba," would turn aside the Christians' shot and shell. But evidently the good man's spirit stopped the Turkish missiles half-way, instead.

So for seven days and seven long nights 2,000 sailors held the city and the oasis, repelling a dozen or more attacks from a foe superior in numbers, until the much-needed reinforcements arrived from Italy to take their place. My men left their ships and turned soldiers with true Garibaldian spirit. They ate and slept nobody knew when, and took up the hardest work without a murmur. They were tired—one could see it in their faces—but they would not admit it. Amongst them were youngsters of eighteen, stokers, electricians, carpenters, and steersmen, who had never hitherto handled a rifle in their lives, and yet stood calmly at the front and fought like veterans. With only 2,000 of them we held the city and the oasis peopled by treacherous Arabs, and were attacked ten times by Regular Turkish troops in greatly

[1] Kubba = a sacred tomb.
[2] Sidi = Lord.
[3] Marabout = a holy man.

superior force, till the arrival of relief from Italy. Then and not till then could we return to our berths on board the ships. It was high time that the sailors' task should end.

Before leaving Tripoli to return to our ships we mustered in a great open space on the sea-front, surrounded by a deep square of soldiers but that moment landed; and the Governor, Vice-Admiral Borea Ricci, came forward amongst the crews, who presented arms, and in a deep, clear voice addressed us as follows: "To one and all of you the highest praise, the greatest honour, are due for the grit and go with which for eight days you have taken up the most strenuous task, and for the great bravery with which you have repulsed all the enemy's attacks. And more especially is it due to your commander, Admiral Cagni, who, by his constant presence among you, fired you right bravely to your noble work of defence."[1]

"Viva il Re! Viva l'Italia!"[2] came the cry from every throat. Again and yet again the sailors took up the shout, and, carried away by the spirit of the moment, soldiers, too, joined in. The band

[1] One night Commander Umberto Cagni was informed that a contingent of forty Turkish regulars was entrenched in a house close to the town. He went there accompanied only by Lieut. Capannelli and the dragoman of the Italian Consulate, and, pretending that he was followed by a company of sailors, demanded the Turks to surrender. The Turks laid down their arms and were escorted prisoners to Tripoli.

[2] "Hurrah for the King! Hurrah for Italy!"

struck up the National Anthem, officers saluted, the natives all uncovered, and the simple, solemn ceremony was over.

Whilst long files of infantry and bersaglieri marched towards those trenches which we had defended for so many days, we ourselves, grimy, ragged, and sunburnt, left the shore, still hankering for battle with that fierce primitive intoxication which fires the blood when the crack of the rifles echoes and danger whistles through the air. Assuredly we shall remember those first days of peril as hours of joy—barbaric but sublime.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE WAY TO BENGASI

After twenty-four hours' rest on the waters of Tripoli, the Man-of-War on which I was and three torpedo-boats weighed anchor on October 1, previous to setting sail for Bengasi, Cyrenaica's capital, some six hundred miles to the east of Tripoli.

Throughout the voyage the sea was very rough, and it was necessary to slacken speed so as to allow the torpedo-boats to keep up with us. Off Homs we brought up for an hour two miles off shore, as the town had not yet been occupied by our troops, and we wanted to prove to the Arab inhabitants that we were ready at any time to protect our fellow-countrymen residing there. We tried to obtain news of the Italian Consular Agent, who was reported at Tripoli to have been murdered there together with his wife. We saw his house, and on the tall flagstaff no flag was visible. A long-drawn whistle from our siren elicited no answering signal. All we noticed

was a great concourse of Arabs moving out of the thickets of the oasis on to the quay that lay along the roadstead. Being unable to do anything further, we continued our course towards Bengasi, grieved to think that the reported murder might prove to be true.

Thirty miles from the coast of Bengasi we caught sight of a large number of ships. They turned out to be a fleet of five ironclads, three cruisers, and fourteen torpedo-boats, escorting in convoy ten transports laden with Italian troops. They were bound from Augusta, in Sicily, and were intended for the conquest of Bengasi. Admiral Aubry, Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Fleet,[1] was in charge of the expedition. He is a man of courteous manners, chary of speech, and very clear-headed. We fell into line with the rest of the squadron and sailed for Bengasi, the pleasant capital of Cyrenaica, a city of some 20,000 inhabitants.

We soon distinguished the misty outline of the white town standing out from the dark background of the coast. Gradually the mosques and other larger buildings come into view, with one big red house and a long row of smaller ones, stretching along the front on either side of the

[1] Vice-Admiral Aubry died suddenly aboard the flagship *Vittoroi Emanuele*, March 4, 1912.

town, the whole backed by a well-wooded hill. On a hasty comparison of the two places, Bengasi appears a prettier and more picturesque city than Tripoli, because the country round is not so arid, and there is a thick growth of vegetation throughout the whole of Cyrenaica. By bringing our field-glasses to bear, we can see flags flying, chief among them being the Turkish Ensign. Bengasi was not yet Italian. The crew, gathered in the fore part of the ship, remain for some minutes, gazing in deep silence. A sad, melancholy feeling weighed on us heavily, as we thought of the fate of the many Italians residing in Bengasi, of whom for ten days we had had no news.

COLONEL MAGGIOTTO OF THE 8TH REGIMENT BERSAGLIERI, THE VICTOR AND DEFENDER OF HOMS

VIEW OF ITALIAN FLEET OF TRANSPORTS TAKEN SHORTLY AFTER THE TROOPS WERE LANDED AT BENGASI

CHAPTER V

THE BRITISH CONSUL AT BENGASI

It is October 18. Towards noon the Admiral sent me shorewards with one other officer, to deliver to the Mutessarif, or Governor, his "ultimatum" to surrender. Stopping our steam launch just off the Custom-house, we send to request the foreign Consuls to be good enough to meet us in conference. More than an hour passes before we receive any answer. Then we learn that Mr. Francis Jones, His Britannic Majesty's representative at Bengasi, has meanwhile summoned the other Consuls to a confabulation. How or why our request, made to the Consuls of the neutral Powers, gave rise to any discussion I have never been able to make out; but it seems to me that, considering the gravity of the situation, they should at once have complied with our request. Eventually Mr. Jones arrives, accompanied by M. Lecontour, the French Consul. The latter yields the prece-

dence to his colleague on the ground of seniority. They are both short men: the French Consul is in plain white colonial dress, with an ordinary straw hat, and Mr. Jones sports a suit of canary yellow cloth, surmounted by an elaborate panama. Their respective Cavasses [1] walk in front of them, making a brave show in their fantastic attire, and two mounted soldiers bring up the rear of the procession.

While the Consuls are approaching our launch I notice several Bedouin horsemen, armed with rifles, passing on to the Salt Square. From the windows of their houses groups of Arab women utter, for the warriors' encouragement, that peculiar warbling chuckle which the women in parts of Africa are wont to adopt when they wish to express pleasure or exhort to battle. We present to the Consuls the Admiral's "ultimatum" already made known to the Mutessarif. Time for decision is granted till 8 o'clock on the following morning: if by that hour the city has not hoisted the white flag or otherwise given proof of its decision to surrender, we should be compelled to have recourse to a forcible landing of troops. Whilst we are urging the Consuls to use every effort to induce the Mutessarif not to cause needless

[1] Cavass = native guard attached to Consulate.

bloodshed or a bombardment of the town, an incident occurs which convinces me of the fruitlessness of our requests. To the Salt Square, on which we stand, a considerable number of Turkish Regulars are carrying hundreds of empty sacks which they proceed to fill with earth. When well stuffed, these sacks are laid in a double row, forming a line of defence which reaches from the vicinity of the English Consulate right across the Square, obviously intended to bar the way against any one attempting to land in that direction. They must be absolute simpletons—those Turks—entrenching themselves behind a row of sacks, when they ought to know that the introduction of high-explosive shells, charged internally with a powerful explosive, has necessitated substantial improvements even in fortified masses of stonework. I point out to Mr. Jones the danger to which the British Consulate is exposed, owing to the formation of this entrenchment by the Turks in its immediate neighbourhood, explaining to him that they are erecting the makeshift defence in order to fire on us the next day; that we shall inevitably reply with our heavy artillery, and that then it will be good-bye to the British Consulate, and a poor look-out for those inside it! But Mr. Jones, well read as he is in all the linguistic

and religious lore of Turk and Arab and Persian, has never in all his life opened a book on the Art of War, and is not acquainted, even by name, with the heavy shells which we shall launch from the 12-inch "infants" of the battleships to-morrow. It is this ignorance that leads him to oppose my well-meant and valuable advice with that red-tapeism which is so fatal to neutrality; and no one but himself was to blame that, twenty-four hours after our conversation, a shell, aimed at this trench, fell full on the roof of the adjacent British Consulate, crushing it in, and breaking down one of his dining-room walls as he was at dinner. The protests subsequently raised by certain irresponsible Radical M.P.'s in the House of Commons, at this so-called Italian insult to the British flag, were, therefore, ill-timed and unjust—as, for the matter of that, the proceedings on other occasions of this same parliamentary group are wont to be

CHAPTER VI

THE TAKING OF BENGASI

Canto il selvaggio anelito, la gota
che gronda, il lungo sforzo a testa bassa,
i polsi tra le razze della rota

O Ameglio,[1] e il ferro freddo; e la bandiera
tua vecchia, o Quarto Reggimento, issata
su la Berca, nel soffio della sera.

G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone dei Trofei.*

(I sing the fierce breath-gasp, the grip of steel,
brow-sweat and strain, bent head and sinews tense
grappling with stubborn spokes to urge the wheel,

the cold steel, and on Berca's towers, breeze-borne,
the brave old banner of the Fighting Fourth,
Ameglio! that awaits the glow of morn.)

When I looked out of the port-hole of my cabin at dawn on October 19, the sky was overcast with heavy clouds and it was raining hard. All around was calm and still. It seemed impossible, amid such peace, that within an hour or two the blind and ruthless forces of war were to be let loose. Yet on the castle of the Turkish Governor the

[1] Ameglio = the distinguished Italian General Commanding the Landing Forces at Bengasi.

sign of capitulation, the white flag, had not yet appeared. During the night the Arab chieftains of Bengasi had met to consider their decision before the appointed time should elapse. The wealthy Arabian citizens proposed to surrender the stronghold without fighting, but the war party, led by the Turkish Commander, Chekir Bey, insisted on resistance to the death. So, while the morning rain fell dismally, the ironclads began to carry out their evolutions. From one to the other of them torpedo-boats passed swiftly, like collies driving a flock in obedience to the shepherd's call. Meanwhile, a gale sprang up and the sea began to swell.

On the stroke of eight the destroyer *Bersagliere* opens fire on the Turkish trenches to the west of the town. The Turks' rifles answer, and from one of their batteries also shots issue, but fall short. Thereupon Admiral Aubry takes decisive measures, and opens a relentless bombardment of the Turkish battery, which is silenced in half an hour. Then all the Italian artillery is concentrated on the village of Berca to the west, where the big barrack-fortress stands, and where the Turks and Arabs have mustered in force behind entrenchments. While the big guns are bursting shrapnel by the dozen on the enemy's trenches, from the five Italian men-of-war long strings of little boats

put off, with orders to get ashore first, and so form a covering party for the landing of the infantry. The enemy's force may be put down at about 1,000 Turkish Regulars, supported by 3,000 Arabs. Difficulties, almost insuperable, hinder the disembarkation. The Turks lie hidden behind trenches not more than 300 yards from the beach, and the ground over which we have to operate is destitute of cover; only here and there are there a few palm trees. The sailors are obliged to lie flat, piled one above another, on the bottom of the boats, for protection from the enemy's rifle fire, which rattles thickly round. Rain is still falling heavily, and the sea is so rough that it is impossible to run the boats ashore. Then a splendid sight is seen. Fifty yards or so from the beach the men fling themselves into the water, which mounts to their thighs, and, wading under a hot fire from the enemy, fearlessly advance until they gain the land. Some are wounded while still in the water, but continue, none the less, to advance. They rush on shore, in pairs, and while one is filling empty sacks with sand, the other begins to fire on the enemy. The company which I commanded was the first to reach the shore at Cape Giuliana. In half an hour's time, with great swiftness and in perfect order, all the six companies were ashore, ready to cover the

landing of the infantry and artillery. Our front is now a mile in extent, and a fierce combat ensues all along the line. The objective we have in view is plain—namely, to drive back the enemy from the trenches and then attack in front and on the flank the barrack-fortress of Berca, where the main body of the Turks is stationed, and where, at the last moment, they have planted a battery. I have continually to order my lads to fire slowly and waste no cartridges.

Meanwhile, as the men advance by short rushes, and each time construct fresh trenches, the distance between the Turks and ourselves is reduced to no more than 100 yards. It is noon. Our disembarked infantry is already extended on the right, and our artillery opens a loud duel with that of the Turks. All at once a bugle sounds: "Fix bayonets! Charge!" "Now for it, Garibaldians of the sea!" I shout to my men; "Avanti, Savoia!" and as one man, we rush from our cover on the enemy's trenches, while the artillery thunders and the shot whistles round. The Turks give way to the tremendous shock, and fly for shelter behind a second line of trenches 300 yards farther back. Close beside me falls, mortally wounded, the youngest officer of our squadron, Midshipman Bianco; a bullet has struck him in the chest just as he

was reaching the enemy's trench. I have barely time to turn and look at him, but can just see that in his death-agony he is smiling. Other sailors as well fall round me in this daring onslaught, but the first trench is ours, and there we halt to resume our fire on the retreating enemy.

In another hour, still at the bayonet's point, we have won a second and yet a third line of trenches, constructed with that skill with which all men credit the Turkish soldier. At this point all our troops come into action. General Ameglio, Commander of the Italian forces, orders us sailors not to push on farther, but to stick to the positions we have seized, so as to give the infantry of the right wing time to complete an outflanking movement. I take advantage of the brief pause to have military honours rendered to Midshipman Bianco, who has meanwhile breathed his last.

The outflanking column continues to drive the enemy before it, forcing them to fall back in the direction in which we are entrenched. This flank movement is carried out in perfect order. The three lines of infantry that form our right, seen from a distance, as they wheel, look exactly like three ribs of an open fan.

Towards 3 o'clock General Ameglio orders

the Marine division, forming the left wing, to advance in line along the neck of land that faces the Berca Barracks; a narrow, marshy strip of ground, not more than 200 yards wide by half a mile long. We push forward with difficulty, for the going is bad, with the water on either side of us. Straight ahead from the barrack-fortress, and from behind various low walls and trenches, the Turks keep up a furious fire on us. It takes us every minute of two hours to cross the strip of land. By this time all the other officers of my company have fallen, wounded; I alone am, by a miracle, unhurt. Right in the middle of the barrack-fortress a shell explodes, cutting it in two. A second, also fired from the *Garibaldi*, shivers to atoms the Turkish flag which hitherto waved over the building. It is a happy omen.

By now my sailors and the infantry are so near each other that we can hear the shout of "Three cheers for the Navy!" with which they greet us amid the rattling of the rifles. I take it they want to show their gratitude to us for having made their landing easier. Full of enthusiasm in return for their smart manœuvre, which was carried out as smoothly as if on parade, we return the compliment with a hearty "Hurrah for the Army!" Sailors and soldiers fight side

by side, with a combination and sense of brotherhood worthy of all admiration. Snatches of Neapolitan song come from this group and that; and when the Berca Barracks are stormed the enemy seeks refuge on the neighbouring heights of Sidi Ussein, which command Bengasi. Our chief object is now attained. The flag of the Fourth Regiment of Foot is hoisted over the conquered fortress, and the Fleet fires a salute to the triumphant cheering of the troops.

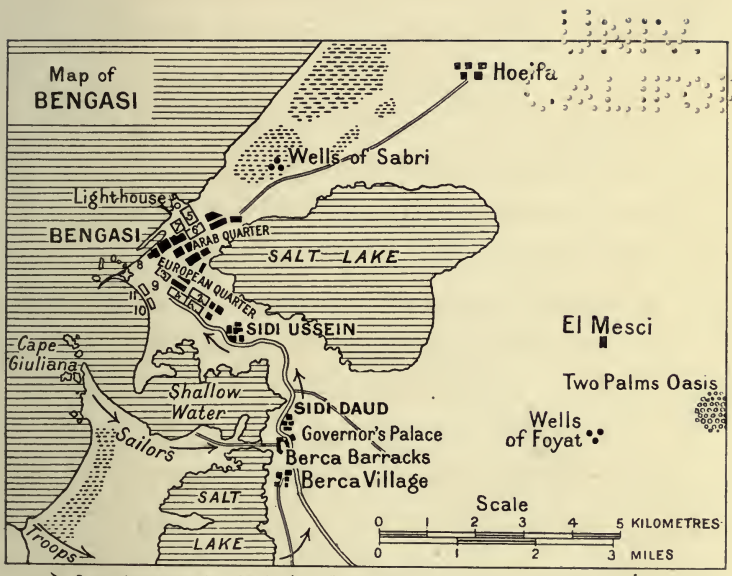
Ere darkness falls, the heights of Sidi Ussein are also in our possession, and the Turco-Arabian forces are in full retreat towards the town. We bivouac on the positions we have won, and, after a fast of ten hours, are at last able to stay our hunger with a crust of bread and cheese, and stretch our weary limbs on the bare ground.

Night falls, and all is silent. The ships with their flashlights light up the city lying below. Their bright rays fall on a cluster of buildings, suddenly illuminating one quarter of the town, and as suddenly plunging it again in darkness, only to make a thousand weird contrasts of light and shadow over another belt of it. Then once again the town is lost in the night, and from the warships shoot out sheaves of light that peer into far distant tracts, southward towards Berca,

and northward towards the Lighthouse. We fancy that the great day is over, when all at once, about 8 o'clock, a furious gunshot roars. What's happening? What have our ships' strong, watchful eyes discovered? Are they seeking to stay the onset of some hostile troop that might disturb our well-earned rest? In rapid succession follow other shots. The din is hideous, terrific. It may perhaps be merely the contrast with the stillness of the night, but of a certainty this nocturnal cannonade is far more impressive than that which has followed us all day, from our landing on the Giuliana headland to the winning of the heights of Sidi Ussein, where we now rest.

A night bombardment is a grand, a glorious sight, and, with its strange succession of flash and roar, and roar and flash, far finer than the finest firework show. For a good twenty minutes the ships' strong guns shower their shells upon Bengasi's town, which, if it had not yet surrendered, had till that moment been respected. Then silence returns, and nothing more disturbs us through the night. Only one searchlight lingers still over the Governor's Castle, where, after long delay, a huge white flag is finally hoisted.

Bengasi is surrendering at last!



→ *Direction taken by the Italian Troops at the Taking of Bengasi, 20th Oct 1911.*

Gardens.

∴ *Wells.*

1. Italian Consulate; 2. French Consulate; 3. English Consulate; 4. Catholic Church; 5. Mosque; 6. Turkish Police Station; 7. Town Hall; 8. Prisons; 9. The Salt Square; 10. Hospital; 11. Offices of the Italian General Navigation Company.

A blue-jacket on my ship, named Piccirilli, wrote as follows to his mother in Rome:

"We pitched into it hot, firing with rifles for quite half an hour, and blazing away with the small shore guns, till the Turks ran from the first trench and took cover behind another one already dug a few yards farther back. Continuing to advance and gaining ground, we drove them back from the second trench as well, and then from a third one near the bridge which lies right opposite the Berca Barracks. In the tussle for the bridge I got wounded, like several of my mates. We got all mixed up with the Turks and Arabs, and fought at close quarters. I found myself alone, with three Turks to tackle. They hadn't any ammunition, but had got their bayonets fixed. I'd got cartridges myself, and fired four times. One of the Turks toppled over. Then I lost my head. A fiendish delight seized me, and I thirsted for blood, like any wild beast. So I pitched in again, and kept on potting away till another Turk rolled over. The other chap stood right in front of me, five yards away. My gun wasn't loaded, so I went at it with the bayonet, and so did he. It was a duel to the death. He drew first blood and caught me one in the leg, but I never lost heart, and, sticking to it, after a minute or two I gave him one in the chest, and he staggered, and it was all up with him. I didn't notice the cut in my leg, but ran to join the other chaps. Midshipman Bianco was

having a scrap with a lot of Arabs who had waylaid him behind a wall. We fired at them, but before we could rescue him he was done for, with a bullet through his chest. While my mates were making for the bridge to have a fling at the Berca Barracks at the other end of it, my strength gave out from sheer loss of blood. Down I went and lay all alone, without seeing anybody, because the long grass hid me. I bandaged up the wound as best I could, and there I lay all night, quite expecting to die there like a dog and only thinking how cut-up you'd be, mother dearie; but next morning the Red Cross chaps picked me up and carried me aboard the hospital ship *Regina Margherita*, where I was jolly well looked after. One of the nurses who took care of me is Princess Helena, the Duchess of Aosta, our King's cousin. You should just see, mother, how carefully and tenderly she nurses me, and insists on doing everything for me, just like an ordinary nurse."

Another sailor gives, as follows, in a letter to his father, his impressions on coming under fire for the first time, during the landing at Bengasi. It is a straightforward interesting account:

"Early on the 19th began the shelling of the forts, and almost directly afterwards the sailors started landing. I came ashore with a reserve company about an hour later. They met us with such a warm and fierce resistance that we began

to wonder if we should pull through. Fighting seems jolly hard, and yet you get used to the job, like everything else. I'll give you my impressions. I came ashore with my rifle at the trail and 200 rounds to fire, just as if I were going to target-practice. Just before I got to land and heard the bullets come whizzing past and shells going off close by, if the truth must be told, I felt a bit queer, especially as I was just about wet through. It was raining like anything, and when we had come ashore and been sent straight off to back up a company of sailor-chaps who had just got about as much as they could manage, I found myself in a pretty hot corner. The first balls that came buzzing by got on my nerves rather, but after I began loading and saw a poor beggar here and there with his legs in the air, I felt a different chap, and fired away like blazes. My mind became a sort of blank, and the sight of our fellows knocked over, one after the other, made me just wilder than ever. A shell from our guns every now and again made mincemeat of the other beggars, and it wasn't till the firing stopped, eight hours afterwards, that I felt quite myself again."

CHAPTER VII

AT BENGASI

The surrender of the town was no delusion, for when our troops appeared on the morning of the 20th to take possession of the place they met with no opposition. The Turks and Arabs had retreated to the hills that gird the city, a mile or two to the south.

In the early morning I went into Bengasi. The first house I come across is the Hotel Cyrenaica, a high-sounding name for a very inferior hostelry, kept by an Italian. All the upper part of the building has been gutted by fire. A little farther on, down by the sea, stand the French and Italian Consulates, the latter considerably damaged by the bombardment. As I pass the door I meet the Consular Cavass, who informs me that inside lie ten dead and several wounded, and that in the other Consulates also casualties have occurred. Accompanied by Leconteur, the French Consul, I proceed towards the British Consulate

to call on Mr. Francis Jones, my friend of the previous day.

The Consulate is built, like all the houses in Tripolitania—that is to say, round a central court. It has only two stories, on the upper one of which are the private apartments occupied by Mr. Jones, while the public offices are on the ground floor. From the top of the wrecked staircase Mr. Jones appears and invites me to go up, accompanying his invitation with a smile which ill conceals a smothered grievance. I climb up by a sort of makeshift staircase, which necessitates something approaching to a mountaineering feat.

"We have been bombarded," Mr. Jones tells me, somewhat excitedly, as he leads me into the consular drawing-room, through the window of which the destroying shell had entered, sweeping away everything that the room contained and making the house rock like an earthquake. "Yes, they have bombarded us. The Italians have fired on the British flag. This act will cost Italy dear!"

"I warned you yesterday," I answer, "that the Turkish fortifications close to the Consulate would cause some such disaster. Had you listened to my advice you would have urged the Turks not to entrench themselves on the Salt Square, so near the Consulate, and would thus have escaped

the fall of an Italian shell by mistake on the English building."

But Mr. Jones refuses to listen to me, and, carried away by his excitement, persists in airing his grievances.

"Yes, Italy will pay dearly for this," he repeats, pacing nervously up and down the room, the floor of which is all strewn with mortar rubbish.

"These are the stern necessities of war," I rejoin. "One mustn't forget that the first duty of a military chief is to take the necessary steps for the safety of his troops, all other considerations being for him of secondary importance."

Whilst I am making these remarks, Isa, the Cavass of the Consulate, enters the room, wounded in the head. He glares at me with two wild eyes, like one possessed, and, under the influence of ill-repressed passion, talks at great length, running up and down the scale from deepest bass to shrillest treble, and making queer, guttural noises, as only an Arab can.

"What is he saying?" I inquire of Mr. Jones.

"He is complaining of being wounded in the head while on neutral ground. He wants to go to London to make a protest against Italy to the British Government."

Isa continues to cry out and gesticulate, turning

towards me, who, in my naval officer's uniform, represent, at the moment, the bombarding Italians. Then he goes away.

"I had scarcely sat down to dinner," continued Mr. Jones, "and was eating hurriedly, as one always does when under the impression of rapid and absorbing thought, when there echoed through the silence of the night a rousing cannon-shot, followed by others in quick succession. An unusually loud report, resulting in a crash of broken glass in the Salt Square, brought me to my feet, and I made for the door that leads into a balcony overlooking the sea. From the courtyard rose a confused cry of frightened men and women, echoed by the convulsive sobs of children. I was just going to descend into the court to endeavour to allay their fears, when I was brought to a standstill at the top of the staircase by a terrible shock that almost made me lose consciousness. The building, shaken to its foundations, seemed as if it had burst open. Walls and beams were collapsing in ruins, and I was suddenly smothered in a thick cloud of dust that wrapped me in pitch darkness. Staggering, I turned back and groped my way in the dark, still enveloped in the stifling cloud, and passed through the balcony into the dining-room. It was a perfect chaos."

So saying, Mr. Jones led me into the dining-room. The ceiling had fallen in. Mountains of beams, blocks of stone, and pieces of broken shutters had been piled against the doorway. One wall, seriously damaged, was leaning inwards, and threatened at any moment to bury one of the precious bookshelves by the aid of which Mr. Jones steeped himself in the linguistic and religious lore of Turk, and Arab, and Persian. On the dining-room table still stood his apricot jam, rendered uneatable by a thick layer of dark dust. Not till this moment did I understand how nothing short of a miracle saved Mr. Jones from death, and I hastened to offer him my heartiest congratulations on his escape, which somewhat soothed his excitement. A little relieved to find at least his precious bookshelves safe in all that hideous confusion, he paced to and fro mechanically between the table and the window. At a certain point he stopped beside the latter and gave vent to a long-drawn "Ah! at last!" I glanced out of the window too, and understood the reason of his exclamation. Waving in the breeze of a glorious sunny morning, the Italian flag had been hoisted over the Governor's Castle where the white flag had been.

At that instant the 63rd Regiment of Infantry was passing across the Salt Square to the strains

of the Royal March. General Ameglio rode at the head of his troops.

Mr. Jones and I decided to go out together, but, just as we were on the point of starting, the Consul showed me that all his hats had been crushed to smithereens, and he was compelled to put on a "topper," which formed a quaint contrast to the white suit that he was wearing.

The city, full of sunshine, green foliage, and light-hearted Italian soldiery, looked like some Italian township of the Ligurian Riviera.

CHAPTER VIII

MEMORABLE IN MILITARY HISTORY

The taking of Bengasi is the most important engagement that we have fought up to now on the African coasts. It is true that we had the support of our Fleet, but the Turks had the great advantage of being well entrenched close to the spot where we were obliged to land, for the Giuliana headland is the only spot where boats can conveniently come ashore. Both Turks and Arabs have shown that no soldiers know better how to die. The resistance they have offered is beyond all praise, and it is precisely for this reason that our success is the more commendable. To overcome such a foe is a glorious thing under any circumstances. In the bayonet charges I saw several Turks and Arabs, when forced to fly from the trenches, pause a few paces farther back, lift up the bodies of their companions who had fallen, and make a shield of them, to continue firing at us. From the strategic point of view, one cannot

but admire the way in which the landing was effected in a heavy sea, and under the musketry fire of the enemy. War is always full of difficulties, and never are they greater than when young troops, after a stormy sea-voyage of several days, have to face an engagement the instant they set foot on shore. Under such circumstances the best and most seasoned troops might well fail in their arduous task. The fatigue of the long sea-voyage, the natural excitement of the moment, the utter strangeness of the country, the attack of an enemy who knows every inch of the ground, all combine to increase their difficulties. But these the Italians overcame in the most brilliant fashion.

Similar military operations were, it is true, successfully carried out at the bridge of Arcole, at Wagram, and by Sir R. Abercromby at Aboukir, and on the Danube in 1877, when, at the beginning of the Turco-Russian War, the passage of the great river, after many abortive attempts, was finally forced, under fire from the Turkish batteries, by the division of the Russian General Dragomiroff. But far more difficult, nay, almost impossible, is it to force a landing, from the heavy sea, in the teeth of a strongly entrenched and fanatical enemy obstinately defending his territory. The French at Sfax, in 1881, attacked and won

the Arab entrenchments immediately on landing, but these trenches, besides being swept by the fire of the ships, were covered with smoke from the dry grass which the shells had set alight, so that in great measure the French advance was concealed from the Arabs, the deadly effect of whose fire was lost.

On May 26, 1904, the Japanese, at Nanshan, attacked and won the Russian positions by fording the marshy tract that covered the left of the line of defence; but the defenders stationed there were few in number, the ground being deemed impracticable. On the Giuliana beach, however, the conditions all favoured the Turco-Arabian defenders, who numbered some 4,000. The few palm trees lying dotted about near the sea gave facilities for ranging on our advance. The trenches, already skilfully constructed, enabled them to pour their first volleys into the troops as soon as ever they touched the shore. At two miles from the coast, towards the east, the tongue of land narrows to forty yards for a distance of over a mile. In the middle of this narrow spit, here not more than ten yards wide, stands a long bridge. Beyond this bridge rises the solid masonry of the barrack-fortress of Berca, flanked by houses in which Turks and Arabs in their hundreds had strongly fortified themselves, supported by a battery of

artillery. The only approach by which the enemy could be dislodged from this line of fortification was the aforesaid bridge, and it was this position that the Italian soldiers won by their blood, after eight hours of desperate fighting. Even then they were forced the same evening to engage in a further stiff struggle to oust the Turks from the heights of Sidi Daud and Sidi Hussein, which dominate Bengasi town. The proportion between the numbers of killed and wounded—on this day about 35 per cent.—show how hard the struggle was, and at what close quarters it was fought.

This landing through a raging sea at Bengasi, on October 19, 1911, will be for ever memorable in military history.

CHAPTER IX

THE SULTAN'S CHAMPAGNE

Emerge dalle sacre acque di Lissa[1]
un capo, e dalla bocca esangue scaglia
"Ricordati! Ricordati!" e s'abissa.
G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone d'Oltremare.*

(Up from the wave by Lissa's sacred shore
rises a head. "Remember, ay, remember!"
the blanched lips cry: then sink to rise no more.)

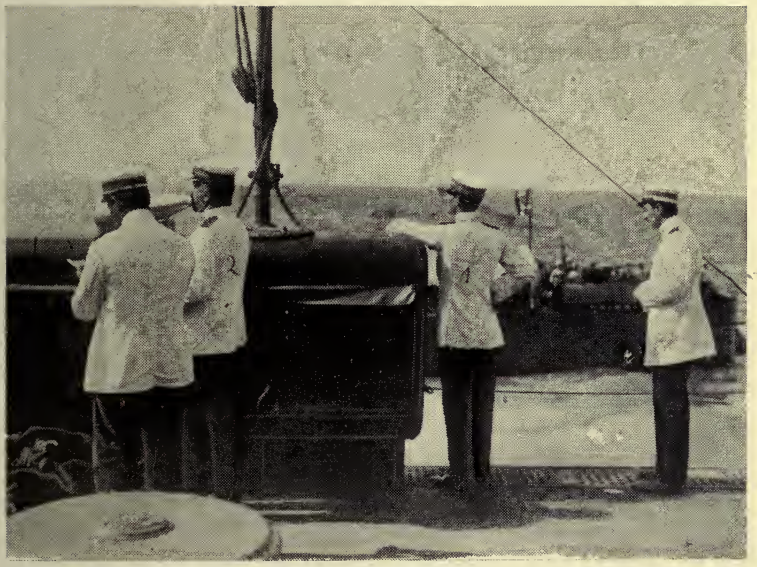
Having spent the whole of October 20 at Bengasi, we went on board again on the 21st. That very day the torpedo-boats we had left in the Ionian Sea, watching the Albanian coast, under the command of the Duke of the Abruzzi, rejoined our squadron. In the evening, after dinner, we moved into the saloon, and gathered round Lieutenant P——, the hero of the sea-fight of Prevesa on September 30, 1911.

[1] Lissa, in the Adriatic, was the scene of a great naval battle between Italy and Austria during the war of 1866 for the liberation of Venice from the Austrian yoke. The Italian Captain Alfred Cappellini, rather than abandon his ship, which was already in flames, preferred to go to the bottom with her.

"We knew," said Lieutenant P——, of the torpedo-boat *Corazziere*, as he passed round cigarettes as thick as a finger, of which hundreds of boxes had been discovered on board the captured Imperial yacht, "we knew that some of the enemy's battleships, unable, when hostilities broke out, to take shelter in the Dardanelles, as the rest of the Turkish fleet had succeeded in doing, had concealed themselves in the fortified harbour of Prevesa. These ships might possibly hamper the movement of the Italian transports, therefore it was necessary to get rid of this menace at once. The Commander of the torpedo-boats, H.R.H. Luigi of Savoy, Duke of the Abruzzi, gave orders by marconigram to Captain Biscaretti, who was in charge of our squadron, to attack and destroy or capture the enemy's ships. Towards dawn on September 29 the *Alpino* had to part company with us. She was told off to pursue and capture the Turkish transport *Neva*, which, freighted with arms and men, was trying to evade us and effect her escape. The *Neva* was convoyed by the *Alpino* into port at Taranto. With our two remaining destroyers we steamed towards Prevesa. Owing to the natural position of this port, the interior of which is completely invisible from the sea, Captain Biscaretti decided to explore it from the land. This was no easy matter. It

was necessary to climb up, unnoticed, to some point on the Albanian coast, and from thence examine through a field-glass the waters inside the harbour.

"Keen was the competition among our junior officers to be chosen for this undertaking, and by good luck the choice fell on me, partly, perhaps, because I was well acquainted with the Albanian coast and local dialect. Our two ships approached within two miles of the shore, and came to opposite a well-wooded mountain that rose threateningly to a height of, perhaps, 2,000 feet. I put on civilian dress, without either collar or tie, and wore an old wideawake hat. A boat was launched, manned by four sturdy seamen, and we reached land just as the sun was beginning to peep over the crest of the wooded mountain I was to climb. After some difficulty, I contrived to find a peasant who lent me a horse and was induced by liberal offers of reward to show me the way by the shortest path to the top of the mountain. On the road I began to suspect, from the questions which he kept continually putting to me, that he had surmised who I was, and was half afraid that he meant to betray me or lead me astray. The road by which he led me did not, in point of fact, look as if it would bring us to the summit. All at once, just at a sharp turn of the



THE DUKE OF THE ABRUZZI GIVING ORDERS BY WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY TO ADVANCE AGAINST THE HARBOUR OF PREVESA

path, we came upon two Turkish gendarmes basking in the sunshine and indulging in a morning pipe. It was a thrilling moment for me. In spite of myself, my thoughts ran to the revolver concealed in my breast pocket, and I got ready to make use of it; but there was no necessity.

"'To what nation do you belong? Where are you going?'

"'Greek,' said I, in the Albanian patois; 'I'm going up the mountain.'

"'And that machine you've got there—what's it for?'

"'To admire the splendid views of this grand country.'

"'And those ships yonder, that appeared suddenly this morning—are they Italian men-of-war?'

"'No,' I returned, as cool as you please, 'they're Austrians. I could see plainly enough the black and yellow of the ensign at their stern.'

"'Well, good morning, and a pleasant journey to you, sir,' said the worthy gendarmes, and went on enjoying their pipes in the sunshine, firmly convinced that they had been talking to the most harmless of tourists.

"My mule recommenced the ascent with heavy, monotonous-sounding hoofs; the peasant followed, and at last I gained the point that I desired. Six miles away from the summit of the mountain on

which I stood the Port of Prevesa shone like silver, and, thanks to my binocular and the extreme clearness of the morning air, I was able to make out, lying at anchor in the harbour, two torpedo-boats, one destroyer, and a large yacht armed with small guns. I made a sketch of the port with its protecting forts, and of the exact position of the enemy's ships. When my investigations were complete, instead of returning by the way I had come up, I thought it better to go down by the opposite slope, which, though much exposed, seemed to offer a more direct descent. In so doing perhaps I made a mistake. At any rate, the Albanian peasant, whom I had dismissed only a few minutes before, seeing me go straight down the mountain side, started to run after me, shouting. When he saw that I paid no heed to him, but, on the contrary, increased my pace, he began to call out: 'Stop him! Stop him! He's a spy; stop him!' Some men living on the shore, whose suspicions had already been aroused by the presence of the two warships and the sailors in the boat that lay off the beach, hearing him shout from the mountain, fired shots in my direction, and, at the report of their guns, appeared from the wood, 300 yards to my right, the two gendarmes that I had met an hour previously. They began to run after me, and tried to cut me off. Sum-

moning up all that I knew in the way of Alpine craftsmanship, and skurrying down as hard and straight as I could, it was not long before I reached the mountain's foot and had the satisfaction of regaining the boat without further molestation from any one. The presence of the four sailors and of the sloop armed with rifles contributed, no doubt, to some extent to damp the ardour of the dozen peasants or so who had collected threateningly on the beach. When the Turkish gendarmes arrived there, puffing and blowing, we were already in comparative safety about a mile from the coast. Their harmless shots were answered by a burst of shrapnel quite sufficient to send them flying.

"On receiving the report of my exploration, Captain Biscaretti gave orders to sail forthwith towards the harbour of Prevesa and open fire on the enemy's ships as soon as ever they came within range. And so it was from the definite information which I was able to give that the gunners, at a range of about four miles, poured in such well-directed shots that at the very outset of the engagement the Turkishmen sustained so much damage that they were unable to return our fire. The suddenness of the attack and the remarkable accuracy of our aim struck dismay among their crews, so that the greater part of them flung discipline to the winds and only

thought of saving their lives. Meanwhile, our two destroyers continued to advance towards the harbour, firing. We kept momentarily expecting that the many well-armed forts of Prevesa would reply, but to our great surprise they remained obstinately silent throughout. Doubtless the soldiers of the garrison were absent from their posts. Nevertheless, Captain Biscaretti, fearing a ruse, ordered the *Artigliere* to lie to about two miles off the harbour mouth, whilst he entered the port with the *Corazziere* alone. The three Turkish ships were by this time destroyed. Two had already gone to the bottom, and the third, possibly owing to the explosion of her ammunition stores, had caught fire and was also slowly foundering. Within easy range of the Turkish forts, from which the muzzles of many heavy guns protruded, the *Corazziere*, with extraordinary daring and rapidity of movement, steamed into the little harbour and drew close up to the large armed yacht. This was the most thrilling moment of all. On the harbour quay a crowd of Turks gathered menacingly round, gesticulating and watching scornfully the movements of our men. Three boat-loads of sailors left the *Corazziere* and rowed towards the yacht at the stern of which the Turkish flag was flying. Cautiously our men approached, in readiness to repel any sudden attack, as it was suspected

that the Turkish crew had concealed themselves under hatches. Nimbly as monkeys the Italians swarmed on board, and after a rapid examination concluded that the yacht had been abandoned and that her crew had decamped.

"Such an incident might appear incredible, if it were not absolute fact. The Turkish sailor does not know the meaning of the word 'courage.' These Turkish seamen, who had shown themselves so timorous in the hour of danger, must at least have felt some momentary pangs of conscience for their cowardice; for, mingling with the crowd that thronged the quay, they now essayed a futile attack. So soon as they saw that our sailors had made fast the yacht to our destroyer by means of a long tow-rope, and that the latter was slowly struggling to get under way and tow the Imperial vessel out to sea, they opened a sharp musketry fire from the quay. Captain Biscaretti, with a view to intimidate the populace as well as the Turkish soldiers, let fly a warning shell or two at the town, smashing in roofs and windows. But the enemy's fusillade still went on and increased in fierceness, so that our sailors' lives were in serious danger. Five minutes had not passed before a ball struck the Captain on the ankle. Without the slightest sign of pain or excitement, he remained calmly

at his post on the upper deck, fully exposed to the enemy's bullets, then gave the order to the gunners to fire on the quays. Instantly a shell fell right on the spot where the people clustered thickest, and from which the hottest fire came. We saw a great gap open in the crowd, and dozens of people lay writhing on the ground, wounded and in the agonies of death. The rest made off in terror and took refuge in the houses, from which they still kept up their fire on our ship, but quite without effect, as the Captain had shouted to all the crew to retire below. He only, though suffering severely from the wound in his leg, and I, who refused to leave his side, remained aloft, exposed to the Turkish fire, as the *Corazziere*, with her Imperial prize in tow, steamed slowly away from the harbour, while the rifles saluted her with a parting volley and the silent guns of the deserted forts looked grimly down to right and left of us.

"This brilliant manœuvre was carried out so swiftly that from the moment of its commencement to that of leaving the harbour only fifty minutes had elapsed, whilst seventy-six rounds of shot and shell had been fired.

"When, off Prevesa,[1] our sailors furled the

[1] In the same waters of Prevesa was fought the greatest sea-fight of ancient days—the battle of Azio, or Actium. Prevesa is situated on

Ottoman flag, to hoist the Tricolour in its stead, they found the Crescent banner riddled by not less than twenty bullets. Then we pledged the national colours in a draught of the excellent champagne, many cases of which had been discovered on board the Sultan's captured yacht."

the last strip of Turkish soil in Europe, which bounds on the north the Gulf of Arta, in the Ionian Sea. The headland, or Cape of Actium, lies right over against Prevesa. Here it was that by the defeat of Antony, escaping with the beautiful Cleopatra, the fate of the then known world was decided; securing, as it did, to Augustus the Empire of Rome. In lasting memory of the great event was founded, a few miles north of Prevesa, the city of Nicopolis, of which some fine old ruins are still standing, quite sufficient to prove how vast and rich in monuments, in theatres, and in thermæ was this city dedicated to Victory.

CHAPTER X

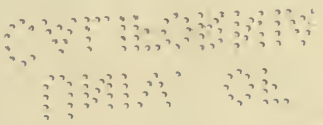
THE OCCUPATION OF TOBRUK

On the same day (October 5, 1911) that Tripoli was bombarded and occupied by the squadron under Rear-Admiral Faravelli, another squadron, under the command of Admiral Aubry, attacked and stormed the port of Tobruk; so that the occupation of the two towns was simultaneous, and both were defended by a naval force until the arrival of the regular troops, who reached Tobruk on the 10th, and at once put the place into a state of defence, the sailors being sent back to their ships.

. . . . .

Tobruk Harbour lies in a bay formed by a peninsula which juts out from the eastern coast of Cyrenaica, extending for two and a half miles into the sea. Its mouth is wide and free from rocks, and the depth of water varies from fifteen to twenty yards, so that large vessels can easily come alongside. It is considered one of the best,

BLACK SEA
CORSICA
SARDINIA
TYRRHENIAN SEA
ADRIATIC SEA
Rome
Naples
Taranto
Brindisi
Cetinje
Cagliari
Corfu
Prevesa
Arta
Actium
MACEDONIA
Salonika
TURKEY
Constantinople
SEA OF MARMARA
Thasos
The Dardanelles
Lemnos
Mitylene
Chios
Smyrna
ASIA MINOR
Adana
Palermo
Messina
SICILY
Augusta
Syracuse
IONIAN SEA
Patras
Athens
Samos
Patmos
Kos
Milo
Stampalia 28th April 1912
Rhodes 5th May 1912
Scarpanto 12th May 1912
Kaxo 12th May 1912
CYPRUS
Tripoli
Beirut
Tunis
Malta
CRETE
Gabes
Ras Agir
Bu Kamech 11th April 1912.
Tuara
Tripoli 5th Oct. 1911.
Homs 21st Oct. 1911.
Garian Mts
Misrata 16th June 1912.
Gulf of Sidra
Derna 6 Oct. 1911
Bomba Bay
Bengasi 20th October 1911
Tobruk 5th Oct. 1911
Solum Bay
Solum
Alexandria
Port Said
Suez
Cairo
Akaba Bombarded 17th Nov. 1911.
TRIPOLI
CYRENAICA
EGYPT
RED SEA
GENERAL MAP OF THE
TURCO-ITALIAN WAR
All places strongly occupied by Italy are underlined & bear the date of their capture.
Scale
0 100 200 300 400 500 KILOMETRES.
0 100 200 300 MILES.



if not the very best harbour, on the north coast of Africa, both for depth and spaciousness. Besides being well sheltered from the wind, it is protected all round, on the land side, by all but continuous chains of hills. Nelson's fleet once took shelter here, and even now an entire naval squadron might well anchor inside it.

On the edge of the high ground enclosing the harbour to the south rises a little hill, the only landmark for seamen entering the port, as there is no lighthouse. On it can still be seen lying great square blocks of stone, the ruins, perhaps, of some former lighthouse. Noting its commanding position between Malta and Alexandria, 173 miles from Crete, 276 from the coast of Greece, and 540 from Malta, Syracuse, and Salonika, the great explorer Schweinfurth predicted for Tobruk a splendid future, and for the Power holding it the supremacy of the Eastern Mediterranean.

CHAPTER XI

THE TAKING OF HOMS

On October 21 the Italians occupied Homs, an important station on the Mediterranean coast, sixty miles east of Tripoli. Four days previously, the cruiser *Varese* and the torpedo-boat *Arpia* had anchored in the roadstead. They were convoying four transports with the 8th Bersaglieri on board, commanded by Colonel Maggiotto.

At 7 o'clock in the morning a steam launch makes for the land, with a white flag flying at her bows and officers seeking a conference with the Turks. They go to pay a call on the Governor of the town, and to arrange terms for its surrender. For this six hours are granted. About noon an answer comes from the Turks that they cannot surrender. Exactly on the stroke of one, the allotted time having elapsed, two shots are fired from the cruiser, followed by others at short intervals. The shells burst on the shore and raise dense clouds of dust and stones. Soon there is a

breach in the south wall of the Turkish fortress, and walls are falling fast all round the Mutessarif's Castle. At the first shot, the Turks fly from the town, retiring to the hill of Mergeb, which commands it on the South, thinking by this to be out of range; but even there the shells rain thick. The entrenchments raised on either side of this hill are all ruined by the fire from the ships, which thunder unceasingly for three quarters of an hour, then wait in silence. Bands of Turkish soldiers, fully armed, fly from the woods towards the hill-country, from which an officer is seen riding down. He enters the half-ruined barracks, but comes out again after a few minutes, and approaches the shore. Men on board the *Varese* have sighted him and follow his movements with field-glasses. Right down on to the beach he rides, quite fearlessly, and examines the damage done to the trenches. The *Varese's* commanding officer orders a picked gunner to fire at him. The first shot falls wide of him by twenty yards; the second flies screeching three feet above his head. He takes the hint, puts spurs to his horse and disappears at a gallop behind the heavy walls of the Castle. Night comes on, and we still wait in vain for the hoisting of the white flag. Inside the barracks, soldiers are bustling about. They have come down from the Mergeb hill to take

away ammunition and food, fondly imagining that the deepening shadows prevent their being seen. But the white searchlight of the *Varese* throws them into bold relief, and the ship begins a second bombardment of the barracks, completely destroying them in less than half an hour. During this time a friendly Arab has come on board the cruiser, bringing information about the town and enemy; he points to a dainty little white house in the middle of the town, and says:

"That's the residence of Mahomet Lury, Italy's bitterest enemy, who has been preaching resistance against you all through the country."

"Very good," returns the *Varese's* captain, "then we'll send him a salute."

The Arab informer smiles incredulously.

"Sight it at 32," is the captain's order, as he shows the gunner the small white house lighted up by the searchlight. There comes a blaze from the *Varese*, and after a few minutes the house reappears with a large black hole torn through its centre. As night advances the sea gets rough, and a storm rages all through the 19th and 20th, thus preventing a landing. On the 21st, when the tempest has begun to calm down, the Bersaglieri start disembarking, preceded by a company of sailors. As soon as they are all ashore, Colonel Maggiotto orders the fall-in, and

in a voice trembling with emotion addresses them as follows:

"Bersaglieri, the moment we set foot upon this soil it becomes Italian, and its inhabitants our brothers. It is our duty to protect them, as becomes the bearers of civilisation and of welfare to this territory—once Roman, but to-day relapsed into barbarism. At this solemn moment the hearts of one and all of you, I know, are turning to your Fatherland and King: so let us give three cheers for both."

Up went their helmets, and the beach rang with three loud hurrahs. Forthwith a company of scouts entered the town and occupied the advanced posts.

. . . . .

Homs is the Leptis Magna of the Romans, and with Oea, on the ruins of which Tripoli stands to-day, and Sabrata (Old Tripoli) formed the three cities from which Tripolitania derives its name. It is a small place, of some few thousand inhabitants, which has only been in existence thirty years, and owes its prosperity to the exportation of Esparto grass, which grows abundantly on the adjoining hills of Mesellata and Tarhuma. It was under the government of a Turkish Mutessarif, who resided in a big castle built on the ruins of a Roman temple. The country round

is far more fertile and picturesque than that about Tripoli, and travellers have often wondered why Tripoli was chosen instead of Homs for the seat of the Regency, as the only natural advantage of Tripoli is its harbour. The rich, well-watered environs of Homs are broken up by hills crowned with martello towers, which might render its position far stronger than that of Tripoli. Moreover, it is the natural outlet of the caravan road from Fezzan and Bornu, and for all these reasons it is probable that, if it could be provided even with an inferior harbour, it would speedily become a formidable rival to the chief town of the vilayet.

Leptis Magna, subsequently known as Neapolis, the New Town, was once one of the largest cities of Africa. Founded by the Phœnicians of Sidon, it was for a long time subject to the Carthaginians, and, after the battle of Zama, 202 B.C., fell into the hands of Massinissa. During the Numidian War it took sides with Rome, and became a Roman Colony. The Emperor Septimius Severus was born there, and granted it the *jus italicum*. In the sixtieth year of the Christian era it was attacked by the Assuriani: its territory was laid waste, and it remained for many years little more than a heap of ruins, until the Emperor Justinian had it rebuilt. But the new city could not for long

withstand the constant wars with the surrounding tribes, and during the seventh century the Arabs completed its destruction. The bold ruins still remaining bear witness to its former wealth and greatness. The ancient gateway is still there, and rises to a height of 45 feet above the sand which covers its foundations, and near it stands a temple with four colonnades and marble base. In the sand our soldiers have found broken columns and statues, and the remains of a Roman aqueduct and large amphitheatre can still be seen.

CHAPTER XII

THE BURNING AND CAPTURE OF DERNA

DERNA, an important seaport of Cyrenaica, about two hundred miles to the east of Bengasi, was also occupied by the Italian forces, on October 16, after an obstinate but unavailing resistance. Admiral Presbiterio did not intend to bombard the town, but the negotiations for its surrender without recourse to arms were long and difficult. The Arab chiefs declared their readiness to submit, whilst the Turks, on the contrary, were flatly opposed to any surrender; and though they were duly informed that the bombardment would be relentless and its consequences most serious, they proved unyielding. Most of them withdrew to a considerable distance and waited for fighting to begin. Only some Infantry and one battery of Artillery remained to defend the place and return the fire of the ships.

At half-past 11, on the 16th, the Italian squadron, consisting of the battleship *Napoli*, the cruisers *Pisa*, *Amalfi*, and *S. Marco*, and two

destroyers, ran up the signal that firing was about to commence, and immediately afterwards the first gunshot came from the *Pisa*, and a shell exploded in dangerous proximity to the Turkish barracks, a lofty building with a wide frontage.

Derna itself is very largely hidden behind a low hill-slope which ends at the foot of another and higher hill. The two form a narrow valley down which the city runs to the sea-shore, where there is a long row of small houses surmounted by a few buildings of more imposing proportions. The lighthouse stands to the west of the town, and over it floated the usual red, green, and yellow standard of the Turks.

The *Pisa's* second and third shots burst directly against the barracks, which were soon seen to be disfigured by a deep rent extending from the roof down to the ground. No soldiers appeared outside, as was expected. The *Pisa* continued firing. Whenever a long shot falls and explodes in the valley between the two hills, an echo repeats the crash of it with a prolonged unearthly howl. The other ships lie motionless on the water, their crews in instant readiness for battle, with guns run out. They seem panting to discharge their thunder. From the city there comes no answer. At 12 the *Pisa* ceases firing, and at 12.30 begins again. The Admiral urges re-

peatedly that the principal houses may be spared. After ten more shots, the *Pisa* is silent, and again waits some minutes in hope of seeing the white flag hoisted over the Mutessarif's Castle. Her hope is doomed to disappointment. To continue the bombardment and destroy the town would be carrying things too far.

At this moment a steam launch leaves the flagship and makes for land in the direction of the lighthouse. Her course towards the town is followed with general anxiety. On board the transport *Favignana*, crowded with troops for the occupation of the place, army officers are seen watching with field-glasses her risky progress. She pushes on to make a reconnaissance of the landing-place, but when she is still some 160 yards from the coast a heavy rifle fire is heard. It comes from the Turkish trenches on the beach. The launch makes a rapid turn out to sea, pursued by shots which have no effect on her whatever, as she is well protected by hammock-bags. The *Pisa* again begins firing with her four big guns pointed just over the water's edge, where four shells burst at equal distances and four great columns rise—of sand and blinding smoke. At this stage some Turkish cannon come into action, aimed at the ships with too short a range. The signal for the whole

squadron to start firing is then given, and a terrific cannonade comes from the big turret-guns. Derna is hidden by dense clouds which, lifting from time to time, disclose a city well-nigh in ruins. Few houses are undamaged, many have great holes torn through them, others show battered roofs or are completely demolished. Of one, only the extreme corner remains standing. The row of small houses on the shore soon becomes a heap of ruins. From some of them columns of smoke rise, showing that the exploding shells have set them on fire. The Italian Consulate is no longer visible. From the ships shots now fly unceasingly. The *San Marco* with unerring aim continues battering the palm trees from which the rifle fire first came. Their trunks are shattered and the great tufts of leaves scattered far and wide. From the western end of the town, by the lighthouse, a harmless cannon-shot replies at intervals. At two the ships slacken fire and the work of landing begins. Each ship has her companies in readiness, and they climb down quickly into boats towed by steam launches, 600 seamen in all, protected by two destroyers. On the hillside some Turkish soldiers come in sight, dragging a gun which they occasionally fire. But no one heeds it. Now and again they fire rifles at the boats that bring the sailors ashore. This,

of a surety, cannot save the town nor cause much damage to the Italians. The Turks are well aware of this, but still refuse to surrender. Their defence is skilfully prepared. Besides the general cover of the trench down by the beach, each man has dug out for himself a deep hole in which he lies safe from both straight and falling shots. They pop out of their cover, too small a target for a shot from out at sea, and fire, just to make a show of defence. Behind the trenches, hidden by palm trees, are a few field-guns. Notwithstanding the enemy's clever entrenchments and the extreme roughness of the sea, the 600 sailors effect a landing, backed by the ship's guns, which are now all firing fiercely at the Turkish entrenchments, and they managed to take up a good position to the right of the latter. The enemy's resistance is fierce but short-lived, and in less than half an hour they begin to run, in small detachments, for the hill, where they are lost from sight. The sailors push on into the town and begin to prepare defence works, while one battalion of infantry disembarks.

It is just sunset. Derna is still burning. In one large group of buildings a petrol store is ablaze, and a great yellowish flame flares up and spreads to the neighbouring houses as well as an adjoining garden of palm trees, which is also set

alight. Through the smoke shoot flames which further extend the conflagration, passing it on from house to house. To view the blazing city, groups of Arabs appear upon the hills, but offer no resistance to the sailors' advance. The ships all lapse into silence, as if sleeping. Over the harbour a great silence falls. The smoke-cloud hangs, dense as ever, in the air, and behind it lies the ruined town, conquered but not surrendered. Such was the awful consequence of a group of fanatics' useless, desperate daring and eagerness to win Mahomet's Paradise by fighting for the Prophet's flag.

In the taking of Derna, the Turks lost 102 dead, and many wounded. The Arabs' dead numbered 100, and our total loss was 70.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ITALIAN SAILORS

Here's to you, seamen all! Brave-hearted ever,
wave-tossed or guarding trench, aboard, ashore,
be what it may the weapon, the endeavour,

toughened by tempest for the stress of war,
grand in the silence, grand when foes are yelling,
but tireless still, on ship-board as on shore;

let each Italian strand with pride be swelling
for you, as, for that Greater Italy
to be, your tale of glory here I am telling!

G. D'ANNUNZIO.

THE seamen of Italy in this war are covering themselves with honour. The world looks on at them with something of an ill-natured frown: it invents pitiful falsehoods to belittle their conquest of Tripolitania, and in its press denies them the victories won by their life-blood. Unused to warfare as they are, and still mere lads, the sailors show at all times the coolness and light-heartedness of old soldiers tried by fire. For them death has no terrors. Their strenuous work is carried out with tranquillity of mind and a boldness bewilderingly swift, in the full consciousness of the sacred duty of representing their country and of the noble

"YOUNG ITALY HAS DARED TO DRAW ONCE MORE THE SWORD OF THE CÆSARS IN NORTHERN AFRICA, AND ALL THE WORLD IS AWAITING THE ISSUE"

(Reproduced by kind permission of the *Sphere*, and of the Italian artist, Cav. Edward Matania)

mission of civilisation which she has laid on them. It is this feeling which sends them rushing to the bayonet charge, with a song on their lips; which nerves them calmly to face the opposing fire, to smile as they fall riddled through and through with bullets. They ask no rest, and, when the fight is over, only claim to stay on the field that they have won. For them there is neither sleep nor hunger nor pain. It is this sense of duty which keeps open the eyes that fain would close; which feeds with joy the body that craves for food; which soothes the smart of wounds that bleed.

This Italian sailor is simple-hearted—he is human. Ten minutes before the onslaught he is, maybe, thinking how some little serving-girl is bustling off to market, investing her money in a picture post-card by the way, to send to her sailor-boy across the sea; or picturing, maybe with tear-dimmed eyes, the gathering round a humble board, where a mother watches the "polenta"[1] simmering on the fire. In short, his mind is set on small things: but let him only hear the bugle-call, the cry to arms, and he is ready enough for great things too. The Italian sailors know how to repeat to-day the dauntless deeds of the men of Genoa and Venice—their glorious ancestors!

[1] Polenta = a sort of porridge very popular among the poorer classes in Italy.

BOOK II

WITH THE ITALIAN ARMY

FROM THE DIARIES OF SOME WITNESS WHO HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF FOLLOWING THE TROOP IN ALL MILITARY OPERATIONS

H. E. GENERAL SPINGARDI

Italian Minister of War, to whom the great efficiency of the Italian Army is largely due.

CHAPTER I

THE ITALIAN ENTHUSIASM FOR THE WAR

Canto l'acqua dei porti. Odo l'appello
rude, il commiato, il grido. I reggimenti
partono. Ogni uomo armato è il mio fratello.

Non più si volge indietro. Guerra! Sia
per giorni, sia per mesi, sia per anni
egli combatterà nella sua via.

G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone dei Trofei.*

(The sails are set. I hear the rude roll-call,
the farewell and the shouting. Armèd ranks
of regiments embarking, brothers all.

There is no turning back. War! Be it a day,
be it a month, or a long weary year;
'tis fighting, fighting, all along the way.)

An enormous crowd of people of all classes thronged the squares and streets of Naples along the route my regiment was to take on its way to the harbour. They had learnt of our departure from the newspapers, and waited, patient and motionless, but noisy, as though they had already stood there for hours and were prepared to remain there indefinitely. Suddenly, issuing from the barracks, the regimental band struck up the stirring refrain of an old war song.

The veteran Bersaglieri sang it fifty-six years ago when, led by the founder of their corps, General La Marmora, they gained their first laurels at the Tchernaya in the Crimean War, side by side with the English troops, and when, under their never-to-be-forgotten leader, the great King Victor Emmanuel II, they played their part in the glorious deeds of 1859–66 and 1870, which gave unity and independence to Italy, with Rome for her capital.

Our trumpet's lead was taken up and echoed by the patriotic notes of twenty thousand voices.

Quickly an imposing procession was formed, ringing with shouts of "Hurrah for the Bersaglieri! Hurrah for Italy! Hurrah for Italian Tripoli!" The stream of people hurried forward at a great pace to keep up with the swift-marching Bersaglieri—fine fellows with intelligent, bright faces, their grey hats cocked jauntily over the left ear and gay with dark-green feathers that waved with rhythmic rise and fall as the men moved swiftly forward, like the pulsing of a wing. So, in a dream of triumph, we passed the city through—a fierce wave of daring soldiers, swept onward in its turn by the stronger and vaster wave of the excited populace.

In Via Rettifilo the crowd made a short halt beneath the balcony on which a venerable old

gentleman with a long white beard was waving his handkerchief. From all sides came calls of "Silence! Listen!" There was a general hush; then a major cried: "Bersaglieri, salute the President of the Chamber of Deputies!" A great shout answered him with a tremendous roar of "Hurrah for the old Garibaldian!" The aged Deputy Marcora bowed and waved his hand majestically in acknowledgment of their greeting, as though he would fain include soldiers and people alike in one embrace; clapped his hands, then raised his handkerchief to his eyes under the stress of patriotic emotion.

Bersaglieri and crowd continued their triumphal march to the harbour, at the entrance of which were drawn up the veterans—Garibaldi's old warriors—who saluted the younger soldiers. Then the excitement reached a pitch which bordered on delirium. An aged colonel says a word to a group of soldiers: "Be good fellows, won't you? Good-bye, and don't forget us; and always remember that he who dies for his country has lived, and lived well." Some are accepting with smiles and tears the fruit and other dainties thrust upon them by the eager, admiring crowds which would have gladly embraced each and all of the soldier-lads as they filed in two-deep at the harbour gate, under an archway of crossed flags.

As the men of my own and six other regiments passed on board, we officers formed up in square on an open space beside the quay. There were about 400 of us, of all ranks, from the second lieutenants fresh from the Military Academy to the grey-haired generals with breasts covered with ribbons of all hues. Suddenly a triple bugle-call summoned us to attention. The band struck up the National Anthem, and sharp and short the order came: "Officers! Attention!" With one smart, simultaneous movement we stood rigid at the salute. His Majesty King Victor Emmanuel III, followed by a group of generals and brilliant suite, advanced amongst us. He had come from Rome expressly to wish us God-speed. The band ceased playing, and there was absolute silence. With quivering, high-pitched voice that laid stress on every word, the King said:

"Officers, this is a time for action and not for words. Nevertheless, I have come to give you Italy's greeting and good wishes, as well as my own. Go cheerfully, for your country is with you in this civilising enterprise. Write and tell your families and friends that it is good to risk one's life for the honour of the flag and glory of the Fatherland."

Tears stood in the eyes of many of us, and a twitch passed over every face. It was indeed

a solemn moment. The King strove to conceal his emotion, and continued in ringing tones: "To your keeping is entrusted the honour of our sacred flag: go; there is glory yonder for you all!"

"Viva l'Italia! Viva il Re!" we shouted again and yet again, as the band struck up the National Anthem; and the ships with their soldier freight and the crowd outside the railings caught up the cry, cheer after cheer. Our beloved Sovereign's words were engraved deeply on our hearts in the after-time of battle, as if they were some sacred text, some solemn oath and vow.

When the ships that carried the troops moved out in Indian file, leaving that glorious Neapolitan harbour, the sun was sinking behind the Isle of Capri, staining the sky blood-red with strong streaks of violet. Dark, towering on the horizon, rose Vesuvius, round the skirts of which the countless small towns and villages lay white, like flocks of sheep, lost in the deep green of the mountain slopes. We were steaming now for Tripoli at twelve knots an hour.

CHAPTER II

AT THE OUTPOSTS

. . . canto, bianca sull' arena
Tripoli infida, cui la guerra schioma,
come femmina presa per le trecce
dalle pugna del maschio che la doma.

Le sue palme schiantate, le sue brecce
fumide canto ; canto i suoi villaggi
rasi che brucian come in luglio secce.

G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

(. . . Of Tripoli, white on her sands, I sing,
the traitress Tripoli. See how war shames her,
like some false jade, held by her glorious hair
fast in the fierce grip of her Lord that tames her :

her shot-split palms, her battered bulwarks bare
still smoking, and her levelled villages
like stubble blazing in the July air.)

The great fleet of transports and men-of-war which is taking us to Tripoli numbers about seventy keels and covers the sea for five square miles.

The Sicilian coast is barely out of sight before we meet a squadron on its way back from Tripoli.

"You must be there by to-morrow morning," thundered the megaphone order from the flagship ; and the whole fleet crowds on steam, and, in the early morning hours of October 12, reaches the African coast. By 8 o'clock all the boats are

anchored outside the harbour, which is too small for them to enter. Such a muster of leviathans Tripoli has surely never before seen in her waters, and the astonished Arabs must be asking if all these boats are really Italian; because the Turks have constantly impressed on them that Italy is a poor, weak nation.

The landing begins at 10, and the sea is alive with steam launches and torpedo-boats towing long strings of big barges. A mass of grey uniforms gradually darkens the piers and presses on into the narrow streets of the city, which resound to their measured tread. We Bersaglieri are first to land, close by the barracks, and fall in on the beach. The order is perfect. The landing of 20,000 men with horses, guns, and all the inevitable train of a complete army corps, is carried out like clockwork. One would think the crossing of the sea were an everyday occurrence with them. Every detail has been carefully thought out, every hitch anticipated and avoided. Not one false step is made, not one counter-order given. Every officer knows beforehand his post on shore. There is no sign of haste, no sound of shouting, nor is there one single instance of confusion.

The men are in good spirits; they ask all sorts of questions about the enemy, and whether there is a chance of immediate fighting. As each

string of boats with its load of men in grey passes alongside a man-of-war, cheers are exchanged between crews and soldiers—ringing cheers which seem to fill the harbour and saturate the air with sounds of happy omen. To the mallet's beat and the ring of the hammer, with magical speed the Engineers have already erected several landing-stages; soldiers follow one another in quick succession, with loads of timber; and sailors, up to their waists in water, help to sink piles, draw boats alongside, and carry building materials on to dry ground. They lend the landsmen valuable assistance, lifting and carrying their loads for them, tireless and cheery. The stages, standing 500 yards apart, are clearly marked with huge numbers distinguishable from on board. Each string of loaded boats makes for its allotted place without delay or mishap, and at each fresh arrival a stream of men files on to the landing-stage and broadens out on shore till the beach is covered with serried banks of men. A little semaphore erected near sends signals to which the ships reply. Wiry mountain-gunners roll their gun-carriages across the landing-stages, and files of men, bearing ammunition chests, pass on in long procession. Mules are saddled and loaded the moment they set foot on shore.

The battalions last to disembark are still on the

march towards the barracks vacated by the Turks, when my regiment and the 82nd Infantry receive orders to overtake the advance guard. Our battalions meet, as they advance, the companies of sailors returning from the Bu-Meliana trenches, which they so heroically defended for seven days and nights. Once more the shout "Viva l'Italia!" rings across the strange oriental landscape. Sailors wave their caps, soldiers their helmets: the men in ducks and the men in khaki grip one another's hand in brotherly greeting.

About sunset we reach the trenches. There we find little groups of sailors left behind to work the shore-guns, the muzzles of which protrude from the earthworks. My Bersaglieri line up behind the parapet, falling at once into their places, digging and raising mounds, testing the obturators of the guns and trying the direction of their fire; then they lie down and await events, gazing across the tawny desert plain.

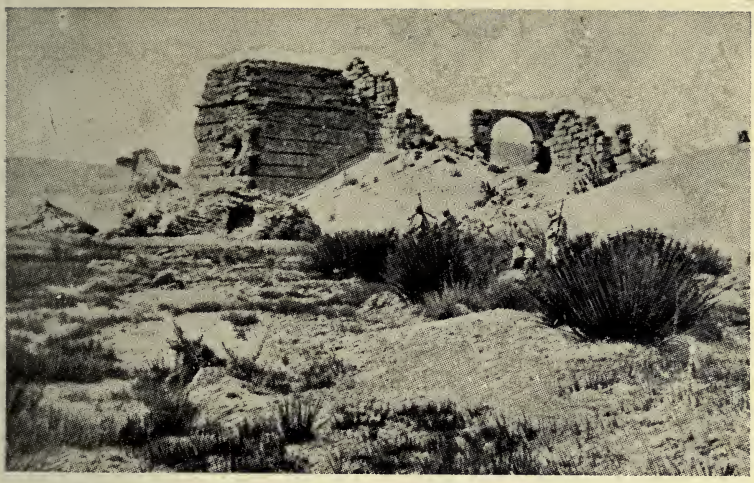
> Laggiù guatano il ciel che si rischiara
> dietro il muro di fango, nel palmeto
> i bersaglieri di Gustavo Fara.[1]
>
> G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

(Yonder, where palms their stately tufts are rearing,
the Bersaglieri of Gustavo Fara
behind mud walls watch where the clouds are clearing.)

[1] Col. Gustavo Fara was the Commanding Officer of the sorely tried 11th Regiment Bersaglieri, since promoted Major-General for merit in war.

A little farther on advance-parties are at work making cover for themselves, rapidly rigging up little forts with sand-bags, and plying their shovels smartly, like old hands accustomed to the work. By sunset our comrades seem to have vanished inside their shelters, and on the outline of the sand-dunes nothing is to be seen but the barrels of their levelled rifles.

Swift and chill the night descends, and all is wrapped in silence and obscurity, save that from time to time broad rays of flashlight issue from the ships. A young Arab who has followed our battalion, laden with baskets of dates and dry fruits, asks a corporal whether the Italians are making moonlight! This morning on the beach another, noticing the smartness of our uniforms, inquired of a Jew, who translated his words for me, whether the Italian soldiers had plenty of money. The mental attitude of these people is very quaint, at once simple and diabolically cunning. With the army of occupation is a group of fifty war-dogs sent from Italy. They are a magnificent pack of mountain animals, extremely hardy, watchful, and obedient. They come of a Russian breed, rough-haired with black and reddish marks, and are both sturdy and courageous. Accustomed by their trainers to look for their enemy in a sack, because the



RUINS OF THE ANCIENT ROMAN TOWN OF LEPTIS MAGNA, NEAR HOMS

A GROUP OF FIFTY WAR-DOGS ACCOMPANIED THE ITALIAN ARMY IN TRIPOLI

frontier smugglers carry their contraband goods in great sacks full of saccharine, coffee, sugar, tobacco, and other valuable articles, these police dogs are wonderfully serviceable in the suppression of smuggling in Italy. As in time of peace these animals play the part of policemen, so also in time of war they render faithful and valuable assistance. They help the sentries in the look-out, especially during the night; they seek out the wounded, act as messengers, and as scouts at the outposts, and are first-rate at scenting out the enemy and his hidden stores of gunpowder and cartridges.

CHAPTER III

BAPTISM OF FIRE

THE men of my battalion have had their baptism of fire. A vigorous Turkish onset was repelled at a very early hour to-day (October 14, 1911) from the lines of Bu-Meliana, which appears to be the objective of all the enemy's attacks.

Towards 3 o'clock in the morning a solitary gunshot rang through the dark, just in front of our trenches. A minute or so later the assailants fired other shots. It was obvious that this was no Italian fire. The sound of the Mauser rifle, which the Turks employ, is not so sharp, but deeper and louder. Even the flash is different, redder and more distinct, like the sudden spurt of a luminous fountain. The sailors in charge of the shore battery, not yet supplanted by the Field Artillery, manned their guns. Before many minutes had passed came a heavy discharge of Turkish musketry directed against our heavy artillery. They seemed to be aiming at a massive

tree that stood close to the trenches, as we heard the bullets rattle on its leaves. The enemy's line of fire was very widely extended; there must have been about 500 of them. We fancied it was merely a repetition of the many night assaults which the sailors had invariably successfully repelled. But this time the attack was more determined and obstinate. The moon was no longer at the full, and by its feeble, waning light we were unable to distinguish the shadowy forms of the enemy. We had to guess as best we could, from the long line of flashes, the distance from which the shots came. The Turkish fire, though ill aimed, was very hot, and the air was alive with the angry whistle of their bullets and the rattle of them on the palm trunks and the earthworks, resembling the pelting of a storm of hail. At the sound of it, the Italian musket fire awoke in fury, backed by the deep growls and lightning flashes of the naval battery. It was a perfect "inferno." Two soldiers were already wounded, one in the shoulder, the other in the head. Both sought medical assistance, but insisted on returning to their posts in the trenches to fire again. Our shooting was deliberate, and each time the whistle shrilly blew the order to cease firing the silence was instantly as absolute as on a field-day, though the hail of the enemy's bullets still rent the air

and pelted thickly round. It was impossible to gauge the effect of our shrapnel, which kept flashing vividly, trailing dense clouds of smoke that shone white through the darkness. As my battalion ceased, the adjoining one methodically took up the firing. Above the deafening din of rifles could be clearly distinguished the monotonous click of one or more machine-guns on the enemy's side.

After an hour's fighting, the Turks made an attempt to turn our right. Only the Artillery followed their change of front, firing more and more towards the flank and lengthening the range. After a time it was found impossible to fire the guns through the narrow embrasures dug in the breastworks, so the gunners dragged them out into the open. They were thus able to go on following up the enemy with their fire, who, seeing the turning movement baffled, fell back once more.

At daybreak, firing ceased in our lines. The dangerous nature of the ground prevented the pursuit which my men so strongly desired. In front of our trenches the Turks had abandoned a splendid quick-firing Hotchkiss, with quantities of ammunition. It now occupies a place in our lines.

Where the enemy lay are many traces of bodies

AN ADVANCE-POST NEAR THE OASIS OF GURGI BY THE SHORE AT THE WEST OF TRIPOLI

dragged from the field. Ten dead, overlooked by the Arab searchers, have been found and buried. One of them was struck down in the act of reloading. The knapsack of another contained nothing more than a piece of dry bread and an onion. This looks as if the Turks were short of food. Their drinking-gourds were found to contain a handkerchief saturated with water, probably intended to be sucked instead of drunk, as it would last longer. It would seem that these attacks, directed solely on the wells of Bu-Meliana, have for their aim the seizure of the water supply —of such primary importance in war. In Africa wells are necessarily the object of strategic movements, yet the Turks have only to return with a white flag by daylight, and they can have all the water and food they wish.

The fight has made the men who took part in it happy. They scoffed at the bullets that whizzed round their heads, calling them "mosquitoes," and are quite intoxicated with this hazardous new game of war!

CHAPTER IV

MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS

THE Arabs declare their readiness to submit when they see that the Italians are as strong as the Turks. Therefore their friendship is only to be obtained by conquest.

As soon as the landing was complete General Caneva, Commander-in-Chief of the expedition, immediately assumed the post of Governor temporarily entrusted to Rear-Admiral Borea-Ricci. The General received the members of the Diplomatic Corps and about a hundred Arab chieftains who tendered their submission. He had a preliminary proclamation posted up in all the streets of Tripoli, which ought to have satisfied the Arabs. It declared, amongst other things, that "Respect will be shown alike to all the laws, both religious and civil; to persons and property; to women, and the rights of all charitable and religious institutions. Only the 'Koran,' the 'Law,' and the 'Sunna' will be supreme. No taxes of any kind will be levied

for payments outside the country, and those previously in force will be diminished or entirely suppressed, in accordance with the requirements of justice. No one will be called upon to take up arms against his will. Every man will be at liberty to pray in his own mosque for the welfare of the Italian nation and the glory of His Majesty the King, whom God preserve. Italy desires the peace and progress of this land. Under her protection may your country remain the Land of Islam, and over it float the banner white, red, and green, in sign of loyalty, love, and hope."

This proclamation was read and favourably received by the Arabs. So Tripoli apparently has in the space of a few hours become Italian, as though previously prepared for such a destiny. It has passed from one rule to another with true Mussulman indifference, and its rapid fall suggests that the mass of its inhabitants did nothing to raise the spirit of the Turkish troops, who were driven headlong into the interior several miles from the city. Be this as it may, the townspeople continue their trade undisturbed, showing neither grief nor regret. The markets are more frequented than ever, and crowds of donkeys trot through the streets and lanes, loaded with barrels and sacks. It is a common thing to feel, on one's

ear or neck, the warm breath of a camel, as it overtakes one unawares and swings majestically on, carrying with the greatest ease its nondescript burden of a hundredweight or more.

Undoubtedly the continued influx of Italians has already brought a great increase of trade, procuring immediate advantages for the inhabitants.

One thing which has greatly struck me is the complete absence of women from the town: so much so that Tripoli, with its throngs of busy men, reminds me of one of those districts of the City of London where it is quite the exception to see a woman amongst the hurrying crowds. The good-looking ones, especially, remain in hiding, for fear we should insult them! This idea is encouraged in them by the men, who assert that the Italians have come with ruthless intentions against religion and womanhood. And so, in spite of the proclamations already published, which ensure them absolute respect, only a few of the oldest and ugliest are to be seen about the town, in perfect assurance of immunity from the slightest sign of admiration. The following incident is not without interest.

I had scarcely arrived at the trenches when I discovered that in my battalion there was one Bersagliere too many who I could not remember having seen previously. He turned out to be a

AN ENCAMPMENT OF ARTILLERY—IMMEDIATELY AFTER LANDING AT TRIPOLI

second lieutenant on half-pay, son of a Member of Parliament. Like all other officers in the same position, his claim to take part in the expedition had, in spite of his urgent entreaties, been rejected; but he had succeeded in slipping on board at Naples with the rest, disguised as a private, and hiding, stowed away, for two days in the hold. The Officer Commanding the Regiment was at once informed of the strange discovery, and the young subaltern was good-naturedly hauled over the coals, but allowed eventually to remain with the troops until the General Commanding the Division should receive orders from home with regard to him. This young lieutenant-ranker is a Roman named Vagliasindi.

Another point which has greatly struck me is the strange behaviour of the Arabs towards us. I was bargaining with a man from the oasis for the purchase of an Arab horse. He made an appointment with me, but failed to put in an appearance. The next day I happened to see him again. He began to whimper and behave as if he were being thrashed according to Turkish custom, explaining that he had not brought the horse for fear the Turks would seize it. A man told me that when the Turks saw our fleet appear they turned to the Italians and said, "Here's the English fleet come to smash you all up." Not until the day of the bombardment were they

convinced that Italy also has a powerful navy and first-rate sailors; and now they are aware that she possesses a strong army as well.

Previous to this war the Turks had become quite reckless in business relations; Italians were imposed upon in every way, and no secret was made of the reason—"because you are an Italian." At the Custom-house, for example, our countrymen were always attended to last, and our merchants charged higher rates. The lower orders followed the lead of the Turks. The very boatmen who rowed us from the steamer to the shore coolly demanded five francs for conveying each Italian, while they only asked two of any one else. And if you demurred at the charge you were left on board. Now all this is changed. The anti-Italian type of official has disappeared. The impertinent street beggar has become a servile sycophant. The men who used to insult us and extort money now humbly run up to us every morning and beg to have the honour of cleaning our boots for a halfpenny. And amongst these dregs of the populace, utterly destitute of any national spirit or self-respect, there are thousands and thousands of Arabs who previously openly supported the anti-Italian movement and now await in silence the course of events. What is it they expect? The majority of the Young Turk party are being daily

driven out of Tripoli. All suspected of being spies are shadowed and watched by gendarmes. The Turkish Regulars are miles away from Tripoli; we, on the other hand, have already landed about 20,000 men, and are protected by a powerful fleet. For what, then, are they waiting—these Arabs who still eye us, as they pass, with glances of suspicion and even of defiance, as who should say "We shall meet again"?

CHAPTER V

THE SPIES

THE Italian troops have established a line of trenches which starts from the Oasis of Gurgi by the seaside to the west of Tripoli, passes by the wells of Bu-Meliana, the Messri Fort, and the heights of Henni, and ends at the shore east of the town, enclosing it in an unbroken ring of defences. This line extends for a distance of about seven miles, and at the more elevated points batteries of artillery are planted. Here and there in the naked desert rise tall fire-escapes, from the top of which a soldier keeps watch. The palm trees, too, are excellent points of vantage for observing any movements of the enemy within a radius of several miles. All our attention is directed towards the desert. Behind us thousands of Arabs people the oasis, and return quietly to their work in fields and gardens, where plants grow in great variety. They pass to and fro between the trenches and

their plots with perfect freedom. We never doubt the sincerity of their voluntary submission, nor have we any suspicion as to the frequent visits of these men, who hang about our trenches all day long selling their motley wares to the soldiers, with whom they readily fraternise. They tell us that a lack of flour and water compels many to return to Tripoli and submit. One Turkish captain, who had no food for himself or his men, came right up to the outposts by night and was allowed to enter the town. His men followed his example, and are now strolling about Tripoli as freely as the rest of the townspeople. The Italian authorities do not effect their arrest, to avoid making martyrs too cheaply; they have quite enough to do to deal with the mass of 20,000 destitute natives lately arrived from the south, who for some months past have been herded together by the Turks in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, half starved and cholera-stricken.

Every day ships arrive from Italy with cargoes of flour, barley, rice, and cloth, to feed and clothe these starving folk. Army doctors are hard at work disinfecting town and neighbourhood, tending the cholera patients and other sick people with devoted unselfishness. Engineers are erecting hospitals and several large compounds, divided

into wards. In each ward a family is housed; each compound contains a tribe. For the first time the streets of Tripoli are lit and cleansed by European methods. In the harbour, workmen toil day and night, building a big jetty which will allow vessels of heavy tonnage to unload. The trenches are brought in touch with Head-quarters and with each other by a system of telephone wires, and the post-office begins a regular service.

Public order is maintained by a body of Gendarmes, half native, half Italian, and a Military Court is started for the administration of justice, presided over by a colonel.

At the trenches which my battalion guards, a Turkish officer with eight soldiers lately made his appearance, waving a white flag and asking for an interview with General Caneva. The whole party was blindfolded, and I myself conducted the officer, who described himself as a doctor, to Head-quarters. He stated that he had been sent by his Commander-in-Chief to ask for medical appliances for the sick and wounded. General Caneva replied that we were quite prepared to take charge of the Turkish patients, that the distance between the two camps was not great, and that those who escorted the sick would be allowed a free return; but that he could not undertake to supply anything. The officer left

H.E. GENERAL CANEVA
Commander-in-Chief of the Italian expedition in Tripoli

the town blindfolded, as he had come, and was duly reconducted to the outposts, previous to being set at liberty. But while he was on his way back, an Arab from Tripoli recognised him as a major of the Line who usually wore a red beard and was notorious for his exactions. The native hastened to report the fact to General Caneva, invoking the curse of Heaven on his own head if he lied, and swearing that the so-called doctor was none other than a daring spy who wished to verify from personal observation the effective strength of the Italian forces and inspect the arrangement of our trenches. A captain of Carabinieri, followed by ten mounted troopers, at once started off in hot pursuit of him, and alarm-signals were dispatched to the outposts. After two hours the little band of Italians returned to the town, having arrested the bogus surgeon when he was just on the point of regaining his liberty. The dodge had been planned with consummate ability. The spy and his accomplices were brought once more before the Governor, and, after two hours' discussion, were marched off by a squad of Carabinieri on board a boat bound for Naples. This man had abused the protection granted in time of war to doctors and ambulance-men of the Red Cross, and it was about time we realised that the

Turks have set on foot a clever system of spying. They send into the city a number of trustworthy emissaries, who have hitherto taken note of and reported all our military operations. Amongst these has been noticed a German ex-officer named von Lockow, who owns considerable property round Tripoli and is a staunch friend of the Turks. He deserves expulsion, I think, although it is an unpleasant thing to treat a foreign ex-officer as a spy when the laws of neutrality demand that we should show him all possible consideration.

Last night, outside a café, a Turkish officer was arrested for holding, under suspicious circumstances, a secret meeting with a party of Arabs. He, too, claimed to belong to the medical profession. The Ottoman Army would seem to be entirely composed of doctors just now. When the Italian authorities took over the Town Hospital they discovered twenty-two Turkish soldiers shamming sickness, and in the Military Hospital 160 doctors and attendants were found in charge of twenty patients and ninety sham convalescents.

The entire Turkish Naval Defence force, which has lain so closely concealed since the first landing of our sailors on October 5, has also been discovered and made prisoners. It consists of a personnel of no less than nine people, all told!

The Commodore, Ahmed ben Ismail, in charge of the defence, one captain, and seven sailors. They formed the staff and also the crew of the redoubtable Turkish guardship known to all in Tripoli by the ridiculous name of *The Coffee-Pot.* The Italian authorities got wind of the presence of this Turkish "Marine," strongly barricaded in a certain house; so it was called on to surrender. This it did with an excellent grace, being fully prepared for all emergencies, with the naval impedimenta ready packed for travelling. The Commodore accounted somewhat quaintly for his presence in the town. He explained that, being unable either to sail, through lack of certain indispensable parts of the guardship's machinery, or to follow the troops inland, in consequence of his being Commodore of the Fleet and withal of over-portly physical proportions, or yet to fight, by reason of the deficient calibre of his guns, and not wishing to be taken prisoner, he had thought it wiser to collect his officers and crew, with a good supply of "mouth ammunition" and a cargo of tobacco, in some friendly dwelling, where he could await, with his kit in readiness for departure, the will of Allah, which had now declared itself in the person of an Italian captain of Gendarmes. So the Turkish Commander-in-Chief of the Tripolitan Fleet of Defence, accompanied by his crew,

without arms, but with a considerable amount of baggage and six parrots, was escorted on board an Italian transport for transference to Italy as prisoners of war. As they were rowed past their shot-riddled gunboat, now reduced to a sorry hulk, the Sultan's seamen gazed at her, emotionless and silent, and went on calmly smoking their inevitable cigarettes.

Notwithstanding all the arrests made at the commencement, who can tell how many thousands of armed Arabs yet lie concealed in the city and unexplored oasis ? This still remains a mystery !

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT BETRAYAL

"Avanti!" non è tempo di cordogli.
Il pericolo ondeggia, il tradimento
è dietro i muri, è dietro i tronchi spogli

che la grandine schianta, è in tutto il vento
del Deserto e dell' Oasi. La sorte
balena.

G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

("Forward!" 's the cry. Not this the time for sighing.
Danger seethes round, and Treach'ry everywhere,
behind each wall, each shot-split tree trunk's lying,

borne on by every breeze that passeth there
from desert or from oasis. Like lightning,
flashes forth Fate. Forward!)

After the baptism of fire received on the night of October 14, 1911, at Bu-Meliana, my regiment had orders to move two miles or more eastward, and entrench itself between the Messri Fort and the Mosque of Henni, a large village to the south-east of Tripoli, standing in a very tangled and almost impenetrable oasis.

On the dawn of October 23 there were no preliminary signs of battle. The long period of tranquillity which, after the attacks on Bu-Meliana,

had made us almost forget that we were at war seemed likely to continue indefinitely. It was about 7 o'clock when the fight broke out. We thought at first that it was only one of the usual skirmishes, which our men had quite begun to enjoy. A wide, sandy track, near which the palm trees thinned out, separated our position from the Turks. The latter, under good cover some distance off, behind low walls, were not to be seen; but we also were strongly entrenched, and for some time their rifle fire did us no damage. All at once there came a shouting, a glimmer of white cloaks, a confused movement in the distant shadow of the palm grove, and a hotter fire. It was the Arabs of the Oasis, to whom we had shown kindness and whose submission we had accepted, joining in the fight, from our rear, without a sign of warning, and without giving us time for defence of any sort. These were the men for whom we had had such sympathy and consideration. They enjoyed unlimited liberty, could cross the defence-works, and pass freely round the trenches, where a crowd of them continually gathered to beg cigars from the soldiers, and a share of their rations. Our respect for their property has been such that we actually brought firewood from Italy, so that we need not interfere with their trees.

That morning the oasis was, as usual, full of Arabs. They behaved respectfully, and saluted the soldiers as they gathered round them. Suddenly the Arabs vanished, and while the Turks were opening a smart rifle fire along our front, they reappeared at our rear, no longer friendly, but ferocious enemies, well armed, and attacking our fully exposed companies from the rear. The bullets of these brigands concealed in the palm grove, behind garden walls, up in the trees, everywhere, reached us, thick and murderous. I saw my Bersaglieri falling one after the other. Close beside me two lieutenants and a captain, who were directing on foot the fire against the Turkish position, were amongst the first to fall, shot in the back. The Arabs' shots are directed mainly at the officers, who can easily be distinguished by the blue handkerchief round their white helmets. It is a very critical moment. Our Colonel, realising the possibility of being completely surrounded by the two opposing forces, dispatched messengers to head-quarters to report our dangerous position. Only one of these succeeded in getting through the oasis, which the enemy held, and reaching Bu-Meliana: all the rest were slaughtered by the Arabs.

Whilst we were waiting for the sorely needed reinforcements, my men fought like lions. My

battalion was divided into two parts, one confronting the Turks and one the Arabs firing at our rear. We were thus endeavouring to break the force of the double attack when the grim music of battle reached us from all the other trenches. Backed by the rebellious Arabs, the Turks attacked the whole length of our front from Bu-Meliana to Shiara-Shiat. A battalion of the 82nd Infantry had that morning been sent up to support us, but was detained for six hours at the fork end of the road at Feschlum by an encounter with the inhabitants of the village. Feschlum is the name of one of the innumerable sanctuaries hidden in the heart of the oasis, so rich in wells and marabouts, and stands at the junction of two picturesque, shady roads. Picturesqueness in war time is a terrible enemy. All that makes for variety and poetic or scenic charm acquires then a hostile, fierce, insidious aspect. Shade wears a threatening look; groves, hedges, orchards are suspected of hiding pitfalls; each clump of palms may conceal an armed foe, crouching, like a leopard on the watch for his prey. The very beauty of the land becomes a snare, provoking instinctive mistrust; and in certain lonely places, which would otherwise entrance us, we experience the feeling of being watched and liable to sudden attack.

ARAB DWELLINGS AT FESCHLUM IN THE OASIS OF TRIPOLI

SPECIMEN OF THE ITALIAN TRENCHES WHICH HAVE BEEN EULOGISED BY MILITARY EXPERTS OF ALL NATIONS

The natives of Feschlum, splendidly armed and led by Turkish officers, were able to keep at bay for nearly six hours the reinforcement sent us from Tripoli. So that by the time the reinforcement reached us from Feschlum the Turks had succeeded in breaking through our trenches at one point, and for quite an hour a deadly hand-to-hand combat had been going on. In the course of this I saw little isolated groups of soldiers and all that survived of whole companies, with no officers to lead them, as the latter had all been killed or wounded, entrenching themselves and heroically repelling with great loss the attacks of the enemy. Our Colonel, with great coolness, went from one battalion to the other, giving instructions. The Bersaglieri fight on, dealing death around them. Behind every tree, behind every hedge are heaped the dead and wounded, Arabs and Italians all together. Now our assailants recoil in confusion, now return to the attack in stronger force, creeping up like cats. The Arabs' agility of movement is marvellous. No sooner is their whereabouts discovered than they are gone again.

But many fall under the calm, effective fire of my brave Bersaglieri. For every one of our men ten of theirs are brought down. The dead are dragged away by their comrades. I saw groups

of stooping people tugging the dead by the feet, as they made off, leaving blood-stained tracks. Shots are fired down on us from the very tree-tops. A squad of Bersaglieri are making play on the tufts of palm leaves among the golden clusters of ripe dates, and corpses fall to the ground with a thud. A sergeant has advanced under one of these trees and is engaged in a duel with an Arab hidden above. After three pistol-shots the Arab tumbles headlong, mortally wounded. All along the trenches, doctors and ambulance-men who are attending the wounded, are especially singled out, on account of the Red Cross on their sleeves, and they too fall, victims to sacred duty.

During the afternoon, when things were very critical with us, I found out that Turks and Arabs were attacking the camp hospital of my battalion, where a hundred or more wounded were under shelter and where they were supposed to be safe from any assault, as the Red Cross flag was flying over them. When I reached the scene of this cowardly onslaught, at the head of a company, the Arabs were taking to flight, pursued by our shots, but had already had time to butcher the wounded, mutilating their bodies in ways unspeakable. Moreover, here and there on the field of battle were discovered Italian dead, stripped naked,

stabbed through and through with daggers, and hacked to pieces with torture and mutilation too horrid for words. Faces were gashed, bodies cut open with great and gaping wounds, and quartered pitilessly. In the fighting, Sub-lieutenant Jorio Raffaele, of the 11th Bersaglieri Regiment, fell wounded as he was leading his squad. He was being tended on the field by a corporal of the ambulance, when a band of Arabs led by Regular Turks issued cautiously from a clump of palm trees and rushed on the wounded man and his rescuer, brutally attacking and killing them both. The corporal's head was severed from his body, and the wounded sub-lieutenant's throat was cut. One must have seen, as I have, the victim's corpses to realise what a dire, undreamt-of menace hung over the Italian expedition, split up by the sending of contingents to Homs, Bengasi, Derna, and Tobruk, through reliance of the Arab submission, so that only 10,000 fighting men were left in Tripoli.

By good luck, the Infantry battalion sent up that morning to our support succeeded finally in releasing us from a most difficult, even desperate, position. Towards sunset, thanks to their help, we were able to drive back the Turks all along our front, and before nightfall they fell back from their position, whilst we remained in the trenches which

had been so hotly contested and were wet with the blood of hundreds of Bersaglieri.

> Croce d'argento contro Mezzaluna!
> Undecimo, con l'ugne riafferri
> pe' capegli di dietro la fortuna.
>
> G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

> (The silver Cross against the Crescent pitted!
> And Fortune coy, till by her trailing hair
> th' Eleventh [1] seized her, ere away she flitted.)

Before the day was over the revolt in the oasis was also quelled, the last Arab combatants throwing away their arms and endeavouring to escape. In the town too, during the day, there had been a serious attempt at rebellion. As it was market day, a great crowd of Arabs had come into Tripoli from various parts of the oasis, with arms easily concealed beneath the ample "barracan." The rising broke out suddenly, while the Italians in the trenches were busily engaged repelling the Turks' attack and quelling the rebellion in the oasis. It originated as follows: a surgeon-major was on his way to the hospital, with an ambulance of wounded soldiers. As he crossed the market square a crowd of inquisitive people surrounded the vehicle, and the major ordered some soldiers to drive them off. The soldiers were carrying out his order when seditious cries broke out from the

[1] Eleventh Regiment of Bersaglieri.

crowd, followed by a general stampede. The shops and house closed at once, and from the windows and terraces Arabs began firing on any soldiers and officers who happened to pass in small numbers and unarmed. Many of these were hit. A young Arab in the service of the officers of an infantry battalion made an attempt to stab a captain of the Carabinieri. The Cavass of the German Consulate, an Arab aged eighteen, meeting a wounded artilleryman, drove a dagger into him, killing him. A cavalry lieutenant, returning to barracks, was brought down by a bullet in the chest, and picked up dead hours afterwards in the roadway. The patrols sent round the streets, to crush the revolt, were attacked wherever they went by Arabs who had barricaded themselves indoors. Our soldiers' energy and courage were sufficient to withstand and overcome the revolt in the town as well, so that by sunset all was again apparently quiet. In the darkness of the night public criers traversed the streets shouting: "Those who do not at once deliver up all arms and ammunition to the authorities will be shot." After nine no one was allowed out in the streets. So we triumphed over treachery as we had triumphed in fair fight. As an immediate consequence of our firmness, when the bombardment was over the Arabs

tendered their submission, tried to make themselves useful to us and began giving up their arms. Afterwards, the Turks led them to believe that Italy would eventually succumb before the might of Turkey. Not yet are they ripe for the brotherhood of man. But from this day hence they must be aware that, if we are more humane than the Turks and than themselves, we are also more powerful.

The enemy's loss in this sanguinary battle was very heavy. In front of our trenches alone the dead bodies of 320 Arabs and 116 Turks were counted; and an equal number of dead and about 1,000 wounded must certainly have been carried back into their camp, as the custom is in this country. We had in all 150 killed, 400 wounded, and 50 not accounted for. The extremely high proportion of dead to wounded—about 35 per cent.—clearly shows not only the close nature of the fighting, but also the infamous habit the Turks and Arabs have of killing the wounded found on the field of battle.

CHAPTER VII

INTERESTING EPISODES

THE story of the terrible 23rd of October will be best given in extracts from the narratives and letters of various officers and soldiers. They appear just as they were written, in all their natural frankness.

Amongst the most seriously wounded in this terrible day was Lieutenant Roberto Balsamo, of the 82nd Infantry. I went to see him in hospital, and this is his description of what happened:

"I was still in reserve at Tripoli with a detachment of my regiment when the revolt broke out, simultaneously with the Turkish attack all along the front. Our companies dispersed throughout the whole circuit of the town, making arrests and searching houses from which shots came. About 2 o'clock we were called up in support, and I advanced with my squad of fifty men to the

point indicated, setting to work to pursue and arrest the armed Arabs of the oasis. From that moment bullets from invisible rifles began to whistle round. Towards 4 o'clock an officer came galloping up from the trenches of the 11th Bersaglieri and told me to hurry to their support, which I did, falling in, on the way, with another company of ours on the same errand. As we advanced we were attacked by about one hundred Arabs, or Turks disguised as such, who fired at us from all sides, but were not to be seen owing to the broken nature of the ground. My men began to fall in considerable numbers. The only way was to advance at the double and force them to fly or surrender. In carrying this out, I was hit by two bullets, one passing through my right thigh and the other breaking my left.

"I was carried away, and the squad went on advancing under command of a sergeant. One of the soldiers who helped to remove me was hit in the shoulder. Thus I got knocked out the very first time I was under fire."

The lieutenant, who was obliged to have his left leg amputated, as the bone was splintered by a dum-dum bullet, told me his story with heroic calmness as though he were talking about some one else.

A corporal of the 11th Bersaglieri thus describes in a letter the Arab revolt:

"An order to advance in support of the troops already engaged forces us to cross open ground under a hail of shot, and this is where the Bersaglieri get killed like flies, because not only are the Turks pegging away at our front, but all the natives of the oasis are also hard at it in our rear, on our flanks, everywhere. We can't fire back because we can't tell where the shots come from. With ranks decimated we reach the trenches and keep right on firing till late at night, while other squads are busy searching the houses in the middle of the oasis, and killing every Arab found with arms in his hand. Things are quiet again just now, but we are always on the go and get no sleep. Just think of it! I have not undressed for a month, and it is a week since I had a wash! When we do lie down it is always on the sand—and that is scorching hot by day and deadly cold at night—with rifles always loaded and hundreds of rounds of ammunition always beside us.

"The Arabs fight in bands of from fifteen to twenty together, and are always led by three or four Turkish Regulars. In fighting, they advance close up to you, popping out of all sorts of places, with their rifles levelled, fire, and are gone again. If you want to hit them you must take a flying shot. We wait for them to come out of their hiding-places and then let fly, and, without

stopping to see the effect of our shot, we vanish too."

Private Giuseppe Cordone, of Milan, writes:

"On the evening of the 23rd I received orders, along with twenty others in command of a sergeant, to patrol a good bit of the oasis to the right of our camp. We had been going about in the palm jungle for nearly an hour, with rifles loaded and ready for all emergencies, when we suddenly found ourselves cut off by a ring of Arabs. Some of us were hit and fell, and the rest, after a desperate resistance, were taken prisoners. However, while the Arabs were proceeding to disarm us, a detachment of Italians, headed by officers, sprang out of the jungle and attacked them with their bayonets. They were scared and fled in all directions, and so we were set free. Your letter reached me on the 24th, just as I had got orders to form one of a squad to shoot two of our assailants who were actually caught amusing themselves disfiguring the head of one of our Bersaglieri whom they had hacked to pieces. We shot them without ceremony, I can assure you, right on the spot where they were caught."

The Wounded Soldier and the King

Private Luciano Airaghi, from Rome, who had his right knee crushed by a dum-dum bullet and was obliged to have his leg amputated, gives,

in a letter home, the following account of his experience on October 23, and of the visit of the King and Queen of Italy to the Hospital of Palermo, where he was attended:

"The pain in my amputated leg is getting better. Yesterday the King and Queen[1] came to visit the hospital. It was a great consolation to us all. All who could got up by their bed-side and stood to attention. I could not because of my leg. The King stopped at every bed, without a single exception, said a word or two to each wounded man and then shook hands with him. Coming up to my bed, and noticing my beard, he asked me if I belonged to the Reserve, and when I told him that I went out as a volunteer, he said 'Bravo! Bravo!' ever so kindly. Then he asked me how I came to be wounded, and I told him how on October 23 I was with the 11th Bersaglieri carrying a dispatch from the Colonel to the Divisional Head-quarters at Tripoli when I was set on in the oasis and got a bullet wound in the knee. I fell down and shammed dead. When the Arabs cleared off, by crawling along the ground I succeeded, after struggling along for two hours, in reaching Tripoli and delivering the dispatch, in answer to which the badly needed assistance was sent up to the front.

[1] The King and the Queen of Italy have been several times from Rome, to Naples, Palermo, and Taranto, to visit and cheer the wounded brought from Tripoli on hospital ships.

The King gripped my hand tightly and said: 'Well done! you are a brave fellow!' and directed one of his suite to take down my name and the number of my regiment. The Queen, who had been listening, deeply moved by my poor little story, unfastened the bunch of violets she was wearing pinned to her dress and gave it to me. I can tell you, mother, I would not have missed that moment—not for ten years of my life. And somehow or other I felt tears running down my cheeks although I was quite happy. The only thing I am really sorry for is having left Tripoli too soon. Still, that is nothing to be ashamed of, and I think I have always done my duty pretty well."

Lieutenant Napolitano, of the 11th Bersaglieri, and some of his men told me the following story of Arab ferocity. The lieutenant had picked up from the gutter an Arab boy of sixteen and taken him into his personal service, showing him the greatest kindness. On the day of the betrayal, while his master was fighting at the head of his squad against a furious Arab attack on front, flank and rear, his men shouted to him, "Keep your eye on the boy!" The youngster had actually pointed a rifle and was taking aim at his benefactor, when the latter turned round suddenly and killed him with his revolver. At the same moment the little traitor's father and mother and

two other boys were firing deliberately at his men.

The arrival of a Turk, who sounded a parley, put the whole camp in a good humour again. It was a mounted officer with a white flag who appeared at our outposts and stated that he had an important communication to make to Headquarters. He spoke in fluent French. When blindfolded, he was led before Colonel Fara, of the 11th Bersaglieri, and produced a document saying: "These are my credentials. I am charged by the Ottoman Commander-in-Chief to demand the immediate surrender of those positions in the oasis which formed the scene of the battle on the 23rd." The officer in question was a cavalry lieutenant with anything but a martial appearance. Pale and awkward, he cut a somewhat sorry and ridiculous figure. When charged with coming to spy on the Italian position, he made deprecatory replies, and repeated in a shaky voice: "It's my Commanding Officer who sends me; it's my Commanding Officer who says that." His hands trembled as he glanced round timidly and with suspicion. Colonel Fara, still boiling over with indignation and grief at the treacherous assault made on his Bersaglieri, knit his brows and replied: "Tell your Command-

ing Officer that we have to deal not with soldiers, but brigands. As to our positions, if he wants them, let him come and take them. You may consider yourself lucky if I don't order my men to shoot you down as a spy. Go ! "

The Turk understood and, without answering a word, departed amid the uncontrollable laughter of all present.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE OF MESSRI

(*October* 26, 1911)

Occhio alla mira ferma, o Cristiani.
Solo chi sbaglia il colpo è peccatore.
Vi sovvenga! Non uomini ma cani,

Per secoli e per secoli d'orrore
vi sovvenga! . . .

G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

(Steady your hand and true your aim, Christ's yeomen!
The only sin this day is his that misses.
Mind ye full well! Not men, but dogs your foemen.

Down through the ages still the horror hisses:
mind ye full well! . . .)

The Turkish attack on October 23, the rising of the Arabs, the Turks' cool demand for surrender, and certain information derived from friendly tribesmen, who assured us of the concentration of great masses of the enemy, especially on the centre of our line of defence, all caused us to anticipate from day to day an important attack. We had taken every precaution. Our line of defence across the oasis east of the town had been strengthened by two companies of

sailors, and detachments of garrison artillery armed with rifles; batteries of naval guns and quick-firers had been posted at the weaker and more exposed points. To protect the two extremities of our front, which extended down to the sea, two ironclads had anchored, one to the east and one to the west of Tripoli.

On the night of October 25, in the grim, shadowy silence of the sleeping palm grove, a scarcely perceptible roll of far-off drums was heard—the distant prelude of battle; and from the more elevated trenches a glimmer of light could be distinguished, twinkling fitfully through the darkness of the night. It was so black that twenty paces off the obscurity became impenetrable. The sentries stood listening rather than looking, their rifles resting on the breastworks, ready to fire an alarm at the least sound that should reach them through the treacherous night. The men were asleep inside the trenches, at the bottom of which their ready spades had contrived to hollow out queer little grottoes, that served as store-houses by day and bunks by night. Meanwhile, unseen and unheard, the enemy with catlike stealth had crept up in force to within a few hundred yards of the outposts. They know intimately every inch of the ground, and earlier in the night had made a short feint to draw our

fire and localise to a nicety our line of defence. In close concealment and without a sound they waited for the first gleam of dawn. This is the hour nearly always selected by the Turks for attack, when the sentries' keen attention is dulled by the long night watch, and every sense is numbed and drowsy with sleep. Suddenly the heavy stillness is rent by a fierce outburst of rifle-fire. It was exactly 5 o'clock. A long, flickering line of flashes, with tongues of crackling flame, blazes across our front, and a hail of shot and shell flies shrieking past. The entire centre of our position is assailed with a furious attack, weakening outwards towards the flanks, where it is little more than a mere pretence. The points most fiercely assaulted are Henni, where I am stationed, and the Cavalry Barracks. As on the 23rd, the line of action is five miles in length.

As if at a given signal, the fight broke out with terrific violence all along the line. It was barely light; but a slight glow lightened in the east, and in the sky there shone what in days of old would inevitably have been deemed a god-sent portent—a comet with long, transparent tail fast vanishing in the dawn. In the dense purple depths of the oasis, thick clouds of yellow dust, raised by the scorching breath of the guns at Henni, rose and then vanished in the growing

light amongst the tufts of palm; and other small white cloudlets, forming in the distant air, showed that the Turkish Artillery was joining in the fray. A roar of guns came also from the left, towards Bu-Meliana, and every minute the thunderous booming of the ships' big cannon made the earth rock again. Tripoli feared to show signs of waking; its streets remained deserted, with shops closed. But from the direction of the Market and the Arab quarter came a fitful popping of rifle-shots, as on the 23rd. There were still rebels unsubdued. Half a mile from where I stood, back in the rear, shots suddenly issued from a tiny Bedouin village nestling in a thicket of enormous cactus plants, and composed of grimy huts made out of palm leaves. Colonel Fara sent me orders to dispatch a squad to silence these rebels. The village was at once surrounded, and its inhabitants were arrested, but not before some of my men were wounded. As soon as the ragged caravan moved off toward Tripoli, escorted by fifty soldiers, the village was set on fire. It was crammed full of cartridges. Long smoke-blurred flames roared as they wrapped the neighbouring palm trees round, and from the fire came a series of rattling explosions, as in squad-firing. There must have been thousands of these cartridges.

On their way back, an hour later, to the Henni

trenches, where the fight with the Turks was waxing hotter, my men were sniped at by solitary Arabs, who had made their way in somehow and managed to hide themselves; and three more victims perished unavenged.

> . . . Dovunque è il tradimento,
> nelle case, nei fondachi, negli orti,
> nel verde d'ogni palma, nell'argento
> d'ogni olivo, allo svolto d'ogni via.
> I marinai lo fiutan sottovento.
>
> G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*
>
> (. . . All round lurks treachery,
> in every garden, every house and homestead,
> at each turn of the road, and on the breezes,
> the sailors scent it far across the sea.)

Henni is a quaint little bare and sandy hill, 180 feet or so high, hemmed in on all sides by the oasis, resembling some great rock rising out of the sea. From the top of it the view takes in on one side the Mediterranean and on the other the desert; and all around it spreads, huge and majestic, a dense wood of luxuriant palms that fade away in the far distance, east and west. On its summit stands a building grievously battered by cannon-shots—the villa of the Turkish Kaimakan—and clustering at its foot lies the village, surmounted by a mosque. In this dilapidated villa is the Italian Head-quarters, and a battery of machine-guns is posted close beside it. In

with their deadly fire, were raining lead over the tops of the innumerable garden walls, dealing death as they scoured the hedges and thickets; but the enemy would open out to right and left, and, taking cover again, kept up a steady, well-directed fire. The quick-firers on the hill then dashed their cover to atoms, levelling walls and raking houses. Men's bodies were blown into the air together with the masonry, yet on our gunners' shelters still rained the enemy's bullets. The ground all around us lies strewn with Arab dead; some have the Turkish uniform under the "barracan."

Meanwhile, inside the villa, Colonel Fara, of the 11th Bersaglieri, calmly dictates orders to his aide-de-camp. Officers come and go, begrimed and dust-covered, greeting each other as casually as though they were meeting at a café.

"Ciao! Ciao!" ("Hullo, old man!"). News is exchanged, anecdotes are related, and there is talk of old chums, dead and wounded. Then hand grips hand. "Ta-ta! Good luck to you!" and off they hurry, back to the fight again. Yet there are moments when the bullets pour in at windows and flatten against the walls, making the place a veritable hell. Up on the terrace a file of picked shots keeps up a steady fire under cover of ammunition cases, filled with sand, set

in a row along the parapet like boxes of flowers. These marksmen pick out certain points for one another to aim at, and wild are their yells of triumph when they score a hit. From the court-yard comes up a savoury smell of rations cooking, and a company of men in reserve are lying peacefully among the provision sacks. Here and there an Arab may be seen climbing, leopard-like, up the tallest palms for better aim. My brave boys pick them off like woodcock. A corporal's helmet suddenly flies off close to me. He picks it up; a ball has gone right through it, smashing the plume of dark-green feathers. He eyes it sadly, cursing, because they've spoilt his brand-new helmet wherein he had inscribed his name on a copper-plate; then he pops it on again and continues to fire.

"What did it feel like?" I inquire.

"Nothing, sir, only a bit of a draught through my hair!"

A few paces away from where I was standing a Sardinian named Pietro Ari received a shot in the neck. He put his hand to it and withdrew it steeped in blood. Quite unconcernedly he bandaged up the wound with a big coloured handkerchief and began to fight again. I called to him to go and get it attended to, but, to show me how slight it was, he tore off the handkerchief and still stuck to

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his post. Soon after, a second shot caught him in the chest, and this time I saw him fall and disappear in the trench. Later, I heard that he was dying.

> Non guarda il cielo Pietro Ari. Guarda
> tra sacco e sacco. Pelle non scarseggia.
> Sceglie, tira, non falla. È testa sarda.
>
> Ancor uno! Ancor uno! Non è pace
> ancòra. In piedi nel suo sangue, ammazza.
> Il sangue scorre e l'anima è tenace!
>
> G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

> ('Twixt sack and sack, not skyward, Ari gazes,
> nor lacks he victims: marking well his man,
> the while, with deadly aim, his gun he raises.
>
> One on the other falls. Peace comes not yet
> for him, Sardinia's son, the red stream stemming,
> heart still undaunted, feet with life-blood wet.)

. . . . .

Towards 9 o'clock the enemy on our front had lost all combined action, and was now carrying on a desultory fight in various scattered detachments under cover of the palm trees. About this time the main body of Turks and Arabs had shifted westward, pressing heavily on the centre of our lines between Messri and Bu-Meliana. A naval battery on our right followed

up this movement, pounding their left with shrapnel. From time to time the Arab horse advanced to this part of the field, coming on at the charge and then recoiling in confusion before our fire, dragging back with them most of their wounded, only to re-form and come again with renewed vigour to the attack. Their infantry was massing more and more on the southern front round Messri. Hiding among the sand-dunes, it had succeeded in reaching in considerable force a point 100 yards away from the trenches occupied by a company of the 84th Infantry. At one time, with fanatical fury, they made a fierce rush at one particular spot. The company was forced to give way, and then 200 or more Arabs managed to rush the line of outposts, and a deadly struggle ensued at close quarters. The yells of the assailants as they swept on in troops, preceded by cavalry charges, were simply infernal. The fanatics, decimated though they were, succeeded in breaking through, and made a dash for the Cavalry School, falling into loose order as they gained the oasis, and attacking the adjoining trenches from the rear. The light horsemen of our Lodi Regiment at once rushed out of barracks on foot, together with another company of the 84th, trying to arrest the enemy, and fighting their way step by step. In doing so the company lost Captain Faitini,

who received his death wound at their head, and Lieutenant Bellini, who had seized his orderly's rifle and was firing away with it. He fell after killing four of the enemy.

Fortunately two other companies came up from Tripoli in support, and with their assistance, after half an hour of desperate fighting, we were able to rout the enemy and restore and reoccupy the trench. It was in this splendid rush that the brave 8th Company of the 84th Infantry wrested the Prophet's banner from the Arabs. A swarm of the enemy came rushing to the attack, shouting, by way of war-song, verses from the Koran. Over their heads floated a green standard—the Prophet's sacred banner. The 8th Company of the 84th Foot did not wait to receive the shock of their onslaught, but, after first firing a standing volley, sprang over the parapet and flung themselves on their assailants with fixed bayonets and shouts of "Savoia!" The Arabs were unprepared for this counter-attack, and, although taken by surprise, made a most desperate defence. Many fell, and amongst them the standard-bearer, whose flag was brought back to the trenches amid loud shouts of triumph. It hangs now among the war trophies of the 84th. It is an unpretentious green cotton flag, perforated with bayonet thrusts.

Verso Messri un eree nomato Astorre[1]
ha tolto all'orda lo stendardo verde;
e tutto il fronte alla riscossa accorre.
G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

('Twas bold Astorre who, out Messri way,
wrenched the green standard from the horde of Moslems,
while all the vanguard rushed to join the fray.)

One hundred Arabs or so had taken refuge in one of the oasis houses, and from it kept up a stubborn defence. Climbing up on the terrace, six Italians fired on the enemy, who had barricaded themselves in the courtyard, and took heavy toll of them. It was finally decided to burn down the house, and a pile of dry palm leaves was heaped up against the door and set alight. The Arabs, driven out by the smoke, made their appearance one after the other, firing through the flames, but were all killed. Others were pursued and shot down by reconnoitring patrols in the oasis.

To stiffen the weak spot in our defence line, a naval battery, just landed, has been sent up with all haste from Tripoli and stationed between Bu-Meliana and the Cavalry Barracks; it is now opening a hot fire on the retiring masses of the enemy's horse and foot. The Turkish retreat is being hastened by a turning movement of our extreme right wing, consisting of the 6th and

[1] Astorre, the name of the Italian lieutenant who wrested the Prophet's banner from the Arabs.

10th Infantry. About 10 o'clock the retreat becomes general, but is covered by the fire of outlying sections left in sheltered spots behind sand-dunes and garden walls. Columns of them are seen leaving the oasis in disorder from the direction of Henni, and vanishing among the countless sand-hills of the desert. They form queer trailing lines of tiny moving points, still followed up by our ordnance. The ground in front of the trenches here is strewn with their dead. One or two of them have almost reached our lines, and still brandish their rifles with fixed bayonet. One has actually fallen right against the breastwork, with fierce, forbidding, frenzied look, and mouth wide open. Although the fight is practically over, yet it bursts out afresh from time to time down towards the sea by Shiara-Shiat. In the palm grove we hear the steady monotonous click of the machine-guns, which dies away and then breaks out again at lengthening intervals. On my right, also towards Bu-Meliana, the guns are slackening fire. At noon stray Arabs are still in sight issuing from the fallen débris of the houses and battered walls. They run back towards the desert, followed by the fire of my Bersaglieri. The enemy's loss is hard to define, but it may be set down at about 2,000 in all put out of action. On that part of the field which fronts our trenches,

stretching for two miles or so between Messri and Bu-Meliana, 670 dead have been counted. Our own loss amounts to 130 dead and 398 wounded. The enemy's force is estimated at 8,000, Regulars.

Of all the officers and rank and file that we lost the death of Captain Verri, of the General Staff, is felt the most. He was reconnoitring at Henni, and at a critical moment in the defence of one of the trenches held by sailors from the *Garibaldi*, he placed himself at the head of a company and led a bayonet charge against the Turks. "Forward, lads, forward!" he shouted, as he led the way and flung himself on the enemy. "Forward, Garibaldians of the Sea!" But when, a moment later, the enemy beat a retreat before the advancing rush of bayonets, the Captain fell, struck down by a revolver-shot in the forehead.

> Chi balza con lo stuolo irto di ferri
> di là dalle trincee e dai destini
> verso la sua bellezza? È Pietro Verri.
>
> "Avanti, marinai, Garibaldini
> del mare!" È rotta la fronte che fu pura
> ucciso cade!
>
> G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

(Who leads the bristling charge of bay'nets stark
beyond the trench, beyond the bound of fate,
straight on to fame? 'Tis Pietro Verri. Hark!

"On, lads!" he cries, invincible, elate,
"On, Garibaldians of the Sea!" And lo,
full in the face death smites him, and he falls.)

His death is a great loss to us, for he had thoroughly studied the topography of Tripoli before the war began, and knew every inch of the ground, his advice proving of the utmost value at Headquarters. Our officers as a rule are too rash and make themselves too conspicuous, standing upright behind their men, who have the shelter of the trenches. The Turkish officers are far more careful of their lives than are ours. They can only be recognised, when dead, by the uniform worn under the "barracan." Armed with rifles and indistinguishable from the mass of fighting men, one can only guess at their identity from their action in giving orders. One of them waved his rifle in full view of our trenches, signalling to his men to advance; he was instantly shot down.

Amongst the dead is also Lieutenant Bertasso, of my battalion. Before leaving for the war he made his will, and amongst other legacies he left, most thoughtfully and generously, 10,000 francs (£400) to the men of his company, the 8th. This particular company came in for especially hard fighting, and was half annihilated.

And there is also a sergeant in my battalion, called Orazio Castelli, from Florence, whose family is very well-to-do. He left by will 5,000 francs (£200) to the regiment, on condition that, should he be killed during the war, the anniversary of his

death should be commemorated by an annual toast at the Sergeants' Mess.

My soldiers have behaved splendidly again to-day. Where have they learnt this familiarity with war, this utter indifference to danger? It is a glorious thing to see their calmness in the trenches, their consistent, imperturbable good-humour; and glorious, too, the terrific fury of their bayonet charge against the fanatical foe, when he dares to advance within a few yards of their trenches. The lads are born heroes.

The battle of October 26, 1911, round Messri was, unlike its predecessors, a complete engagement, and, both for the numbers taking part in it and the results ensuing, must rank as a regular battle—the Battle of Messri.

We have not as yet taken the offensive with a view to occupying the interior, because it is necessary first to establish a firm base of operations before proceeding to advance. So it is only natural that the troops, whose landing was unopposed at Tripoli, though furiously contested at Bengasi, should have to act on the defensive for some considerable time. But at the battle of Messri, at a certain stage and with great timeliness, the Italian commander contrived to turn his defence into a counter-attack, and thus decide the disastrous retreat of the enemy. On

the 23rd the latter had largely relied on the treachery of the Arabs, and with good reason, as it is no ordinary occurrence for troops to continue fighting undaunted for several hours, like the 11th Bersaglieri, when treacherously attacked in the rear. But on the 26th, though again cherishing hopes of an Arab revolt, the Turks trusted more to the number of troops engaged and the irresistible dash of their attack.

As on the 23rd, so now, a second time their hopes of victory were disappointed, and they were driven back with very heavy loss. Not for some days did they feel in a position seriously to resume the attack on our defence lines. But the battle of the 26th presents a more important feature. Not only did the Italians on this occasion advance from the trenches in pursuit of the flying enemy, but a complete body of troops was also detached from the right or western wing, which, converging to the left, fell heavily on to the force still obstinately attacking our centre. This bold and judicious movement met with its due reward. The enemy's retreat became a rout; his losses were doubled; rifles, sabres, guns, and numerous prisoners fell into our hands, and the 8th Company of the 84th Infantry, in a furious bayonet encounter, succeeded in wrenching from the enemy the green banner of the Prophet, that

sacred symbol of his faith and incentive to his valour. There is but one thing to regret, and that is that no cavalry was available for the pursuit; for it might have led to the annihilation of the flying army. But besides the fact that we have at this moment very few cavalry in the country, it must not be forgotten that the European horse is but ill adapted for rapid movement across the sandy plains of Tripoli, over which, on the contrary, the small native steeds are very swift. The combination between scouts and fighting line, infantry and artillery, Army and Fleet, frontal defenders and sections in reserve was all that could be wished, and its consequences great and decisive. In this battle, for the first time in military history, airmen took part in the operations, circling over the combatants at a height of 1,800 feet, descending to give information concerning the enemy's changes of position, and helping the artillery, by opportune suggestions, to aim with deadlier effect. In short, this action must rank as a decisive engagement and must also have convinced both Turks and Arabs of the warlike capacity of our troops, besides inspiring our soldiers with fresh faith in their own courage, which should prove an earnest of further victories to come.

CHAPTER IX

THE ARAB WARRIOR

THE ground in front of the trenches, where most of the fighting took place, seems strewn with the enemy's dead. They lie all in one direction, as though some gigantic scythe had passed over the place. Their heads are towards our trenches, which shows that they were running when struck down. Wrapped in the coarse, white "barracan," they wear, even in death, a look of fury. Amongst them may be noticed men of the short-bearded Bedouin type, Arabs of the northern oasis in red scesigia with blue tassel, and fair-skinned Turks of Mongolian race. All are armed with Mausers, and carry queer yataghans and scimitars. They wear amulets fastened to their leather shoulder-belts, and in their knapsacks are little bags of salt, packets of tea and sugar, and in many cases a copy of the Koran, not infrequently copied out by hand. It is risky

to advance among these fallen barbarians. There are wounded men amongst them who lie in wait for the Red Cross surgeons and patrols, and treacherously fire on them. An ambulance patrol was one day reconnoitring, when an Arab, to whom the Red Cross assistants hastened to render their services, rose up suddenly to his knees, and fired a shot that struck a corporal on the head and killed him. Some of them have crawled under the cover of a rise in the ground and, crouching like wild beasts, with their rifles concealed under them, fire, from time to time, as long as their strength holds out. When they are discovered and see our men advancing on them, they make deprecatory signs and beg for quarter.

Underneath the Arab bravery lies a substratum of cowardice. When fanaticism dies down, their habitual deceit and lying come again to the top. Treachery seems an essential part of their nature. One of them, on a similar occasion, began to repeat over and over again the only two Italian words that he knew—"Buon giorno! buon giorno!" as though he wanted to show his friendliness towards our men.

The Turks are not much better, as the following incident will prove. An Italian patrol was suddenly fired on from an ambush, by Bedouins under

a Turkish officer, who discharged a revolver at the Italian lieutenant (Violini) who was in command. The Italians returned the fire, wounding the officer and killing a few Arabs. The wounded officer begged for assistance, but when the Italian lieutenant advanced towards him to give him help, the Turk fired two more shots at him, but without effect. The Italian was obliged to use his own revolver in self-defence. The Turk, who expired shortly afterwards, was identified as an officer named Osman Mahdi.

The Arab fires on us only when he is safely out of sight. If we march on him he runs away; when our backs are turned he attacks us. He is afraid to meet us, and look us in the face, just like a wild beast in the presence of his tamer. Often as we pass along the streets of Tripoli we feel his evil glance fixed on us, but if one turns and looks him in the face he drops his eyes and makes a humble salute. The mind of these people is a strange mixture of treachery and ferocity. They only attack when they are ten to one, as on the fatal October 23, or else under the wild impulse of that religious frenzy which fills them with the blood-lust even to their own destruction; an impulse, not of courage, but of epileptic fury, as shown in the battle of October 26. The Italian soldier, on the contrary, though deeply religious,

is moved by a nobler feeling than the mere desire for reward in another world. He is driven to heroic deeds by the thought of duty, and of the Fatherland that he is called on to defend and glorify.

CHAPTER X

THE ART OF DOMINATING THE ARABS

THE Arabs who joined the Turks in the fight on October 23 and 26 are all from the warlike tribes of the oases of Tarhuna, Misrata, Tagiura, and Mount Garian. We have been told by friendly men among them that these people were forced by the Turks to march in front to the attack of our trenches, the Turks themselves keeping in the rear, holding the Arab women as hostages, and threatening to massacre the lot of them should they fail to break through the Italian line. Such is the Turk's usual method; even in fighting against the Albanians a few years ago they forced the Albanian Redifs [1] to march against their brothers by pointing artillery at their backs. In any case, the fierceness of the Arab attacks and the presence of the green standard of the Prophet, which fell into our hands, clearly show an attempt to raise a Holy War.

The Arab troops are incorporated with the Regulars and commanded by Turkish officers. They

[1] Turkish reserves.

are well drilled in marksmanship, and on almost every dead body is found a manual in Arabic with figures to illustrate shooting in time of war. One Arab prisoner told me how the Turks had overawed the Arabs of the Hinterland. From his account it appears quite clear that, over and above religious feeling, the upheaval of the Arabs of the interior in the Turks' favour is due to their strong moral force and presence of mind at critical moments, and more especially to their having succeeded in creating among the Arab masses the impression that they have strong forces in reserve which will, sooner or later, decide the war in their favour. A party of Turks who had fled from Tripoli on October 5, so this man told me, was attacked on the second evening by the Arabs of Zanzur and Zavia. Their situation was extremely critical. They were liable either to be massacred by the Arabs, who were hot for plunder, or to be made prisoners by the Italians. But the Turks were saved by their good luck and their masterful, domineering nature, which is accustomed to military supremacy backed by religious prestige. They contrived to enclose the Arabs in a circle, rode the rebels down and stripped them of their rifles, making about a hundred of them prisoners, and driving them before them in true Turkish style with kicks and blows with the flat of their swords. The

next morning the Arabs were soundly thrashed. Bedouins and sheikhs cried out, as the blows descended, that it all arose from a misunderstanding. Between the strokes the Turks demanded: "Why, ye dogs, did ye attack us?" "Have mercy!" answered the Arabs; "it was because you abandoned Tripoli. We think you are no longer able to protect us. If we had taken you prisoners just now the war would have been over and our interests safe." Not till then did the Turks realise what a fatal mistake they had made in relinquishing Tripoli without a struggle, and they saw that their prestige would be gone for ever if they showed weakness a second time. Hence they made the continual attacks throughout October which won the Arabs back.

An Arab prisoner in his narrative praised the calm, overbearing haughtiness of the Turks on the following occasions. Driven by lust of booty, himself and 700 others of the formidable Tarhuna tribe had reached a Turkish camp of only 80 men, and demanded the surrender of their ammunition chests. The Turkish Commander answered: "Certainly, by all means; here they are; come and take them. Well, why don't you take them? Behind him stood only twenty Turkish soldiers with their rifles at their feet, calmly waiting. Then the Sheikh of Tarhuna signalled to his men to

move away, and embraced the Turkish commander, saying, "You are men!" "And you are dogs!" returned the other; and from that day forward the Tarhuna became one of the tribes most devoted to the Turks.

Here is another instance. When the first men-of-war appeared off Zuara, the Arabs came whimpering to the Turkish Commander and begged him to treat with the Italians to avoid a bombardment of the town. "Why?" he demanded. "As for dying, we have all got to die some day: what does it matter when? And are we to be afraid to die for the glory of Allah? You fools! we shall only die when it pleases Him." And so the men of Zuara remained there, in spite of the repeated bombardments.

The caravans carry these stories, no doubt exaggerating them, into the desert, and rouse the enthusiasm of the most distant tribes: feuds between race and race, mountain and plain, are forgotten, and one and all march for the Turkish camp, a journey sometimes of seventy miles at a stretch. The Turks receive their support with the most supreme indifference; they neither cajole nor flatter, but maintain a complete reserve, creating among the new-comers the impression that they possess such resources as to have no need of further assistance. One tribe after the other arrives at the

Turkish camp, raising their excited war-cry and marching past the quarters of the Turkish Staff, but not a single Turk appears on the verandah ; no one thinks of welcoming them. The Bedouins shout : " Long life to the Sultan ! Long life to his heroes ! " but the Turks make no reply. The Staff remains within closed doors. The Sheikhs are received in audience, at their particular request, as a special favour. Colonel Mesciut Bey and his staff, which includes no one over the age of forty, issue lordly orders to white-bearded sheikhs whose army is at times more numerous than all the Turkish forces put together. Undoubtedly the Turks know better than the Italians how to treat this strange Arab nation so as to keep it under control. We have treated them like a European people, not like a race demoralised by slavery.

CHAPTER XI

DAYS OF TERROR

O Tripoli, città di fellonia,
tu proverai se Roma abbia calcagna
di bronzo, e se il suo giogo ferreo sia.
G. D'Annunzio, *Canzone della Diana.*

(O Tripoli, thou town of perfidy,
thou yet shalt find that Rome hath heels of bronze
and that her yoke lies iron over thee.)

The combined attack of the Turks at our front and the rebellious Arabs on our rear, which took place on October 23 and 26, 1911, had been arranged some days previously. After the battles were over the latter still kept up a desultory fight in the oasis, and shots were heard here and there for some days.

To give our men a rest and also to make the line of defence stronger for the repelling of possible future attacks, the front of our position near Henni, in the oasis, was slightly altered by withdrawing it about one mile. This change in the front had been deemed necessary since the first

days of our landing, when it was soon seen that such an extensive defence-line could not everywhere withstand the enemy's onslaught when he was in considerable force. By restricting the line it not only becomes stronger, but also leaves more men to act in the reserve and keep the oasis clear, and, moreover, to guard us from fresh surprises in the rear. At the same time, General Caneva had for some days since October 23 given orders to disarm all natives. Fire-arms and ammunition have been found concealed in all sorts of places. During the process of confiscation, if it was not found possible to effect the surrender of the arms and cartridges at once, the rebels' huts were fired. Hundreds of Arabs have thus been arrested and brought into the town. Many refused to comply with the order or to surrender, and greeted the Italian patrols with shots. They were put to death there and then.

The greatest care was taken by the Italian soldiers to make no innocent victims, and I am prepared to assert that in this matter of the suppression of the revolts we were guilty of excessive leniency towards the natives. The severity afterwards shown by the military authorities restored calm throughout all the district between the town and trenches. Once more the Arabs became humble, and when the sound of the rifles that

carried the sentence into effect was heard the streets straightway became deserted.

Tripoli is now enclosed by an impregnable ring of defence-works. No longer do the Arab caravans pass to and fro; access is no longer permitted to the lines; sentries fire on all who disobey the order to halt; and now, for the first time, the Turks are without information concerning our movements and preparations. Rifles in enormous quantities are unearthed by the patrols who search the oasis; over a million cartridges have been confiscated. Cases of them are found in the houses, hidden in sacks of barley, buried in cellars, and even concealed in wells. Tripoli must have been overflowing with material of war, which found its way to the Turkish camp by means of the caravans that, until October 23, freely crossed our line to trade with the regions of the interior. Close to the trenches occupied by my battalion a strange Arab funeral procession has been stopped. Sentries who examined the coffin found, in place of the corpse, a first-class machine-gun intended for the Turks. The disarming of the Arabs will continue actively. Above all, our rear must be protected. This is only fair. An enemy that faces you must be fought; an enemy that betrays and attacks you stealthily in the rear must be crushed!

All these arms and munitions of war were brought from Constantinople by the transport *Derna*, which might easily have been captured, but was allowed to proceed from an exaggerated regard for the laws of war, the time granted by the "ultimatum" being not yet fully expired. Obviously it is our imperative duty to clear the oasis of these rebellious people. This once accomplished, it will be easier for us to get rid of the Turks. The war is at present confined to one point—the oasis. It would be madness for us to think of advancing without first crushing the rebellious Arabs in our rear. For those who are unacquainted with the ground it is hard to realise the tactical difficulties of this slow and dangerous operation, in which craft counts for more than personal bravery. Thousands of armed natives lurk concealed in this mysterious wilderness, where the sound of the woodman's axe is never heard and the trailing, tangled boughs are innocent of the shears. The palm trees are gigantic, and up in them Arabs from morning to night lie hidden like monkeys, armed to the teeth. Stretching in all directions are enormous hedges and thickets, walls, houses, and huts; so that it is impossible to set foot there without falling into an ambuscade. Such being the nature of the ground, one can readily see how easy it is for the Arabs to conceal

ARAB TRIBES OF THE INTERIOR REINFORCING TURKS AT AIN-ZARA

ARMED ARABS ARRESTED IN THE OASIS OF TRIPOLI

themselves and do us mischief, and how difficult, on the other hand, it is for us to shoot or arrest them without loss to ourselves. It has been remarked that the houses are perforated with loopholes through which the Arabs fire at us. A handful of them hidden up in the trees, behind a loopholed wall or amongst the clumps of cactus, can harass the advance of hundreds of soldiers, causing considerable danger and loss. In short, it is a case of downright brigandage. We no longer are face to face with a fair antagonist, but with a horde of bandits in the Turkish pay; and as such it is our duty and our right to treat them. Those who resist are shot down on the spot; those who surrender without a struggle are arrested and sent to the town, where they are massed together in a district set apart for them, and well guarded by our troops; whilst hundreds of the more dangerous characters are sent straight away to Italy. Despite our undoubted right summarily to shoot these assassins, many of them are merely arrested and sent to Tripoli with a notice fastened to their back describing their offence.

Amongst those arrested is the Marabout of Sidi Benur, the fanatic implicated in the murder of the Italian journalist Gastone Tirreni, about two years ago. At the instance of the judges he made a full confession and has been condemned to death.

Some of the officers are too kind-hearted and humane fully to carry out the martial law under which we have lived since the day of the revolt. One Arab fired his rifle every few minutes. However close and persistent the search for him, we have not yet succeeded in identifying him. No fewer than six of the Bersaglieri of my battalion have fallen victims to this clever assassin.

Close by the trench where I am posted a shower of bullets not long ago rained down from the tops of the neighbouring palms on a company of Engineers, who were levelling trees and huts to make room for the batteries at present stationed at Shiara-Shiat, and bowled over a dozen or so of them. My adjutant, who was sent to Tripoli with dispatches for Head-quarters, failed to return to camp, being wounded in the thigh by a treacherous shot from an Arab just as he was entering the town. Our surgeon-lieutenant, Amerigo de Murtas, has been missing since yesterday: I fear he has been captured by the Arabs in the oasis near here. Several times they have attacked isolated bands of Italian soldiers merely to rob them of their rations, which they instantly set to work to devour. A gang of nine of them was captured in the act of eating the loaves taken from soldiers who were sub-

sequently found murdered in a thick cactus grove hard by. The bodies of the Arab dead, discovered yesterday after the terrible battle, are so thin and emaciated as to make one think they were driven to fight not merely by religious animosity, but also by a hunger which renders them daring, even to madness. An Arab prisoner told me that many of his comrades were brigands from the mountains of Garian, forced to fight by the Turks, who told them that it would be quite easy for them to gain the victory and then pillage the Italian camp and the town. Besides, the Ulemas had promised them Paradise if they fell in fight against the infidel Italians, and the Turks had offered a reward of ten thalers for every Italian soldier brought to them, alive or dead. This may perhaps explain the disappearance of fifty men of my battalion during the hand-to-hand struggle of the 23rd. Mad with hunger, and goaded on by the Turks and Ulemas, they flung themselves desperately on the Italians, more like murderers than honest enemies.

A Bersagliere called Colombo has been admitted to the hospital. The poor fellow is deaf and dumb from nervous shock sustained during a gruesome experience. He has made a written statement to the effect that during the fight of

the 23rd he was sent, with ten comrades and a corporal, to return the fire of a party of the enemy who were harassing the Italian rear. Almost all his companions were shot down, and when only the corporal and himself were left they were set upon by the enemy, made prisoners, and carried off to a palm grove, where they were stripped and tied to trees; the Arabs meanwhile executing a war-dance round them, and the Turks foully insulting them, spitting in their faces, and discussing how they should be tortured. When the Arabs eventually began to flay them on the breast, their shrieks were heard by soldiers of the Red Cross who were not far away, and with a shot or two put the Turks to flight. This deed of monstrous ferocity would suffice of itself to justify the extremely vigorous measures adopted by the Italian authorities at once to suppress the native revolt, and mete out condign punishment to all who are guilty of bloodshed.

Every roadway through the oasis had become a death-trap. Captain Bruchi, who had received a wound in the leg, was attacked as he was being conveyed to hospital. His two bearers were killed, and, rather than run the risk of being tortured by the Arabs, he blew out his brains. The Arabs wreaked their vengeance on

AT THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE DESERT NEAR GARGARESCH

DEPARTURE FOR ITALY OF ARABS ON WHOM SUSPICION RESTED

his dead body, riddling it with knife and bayonet thrusts.

Groups of them, besieged in their houses, still held out on October 27, exacting fresh victims from our troops. Against them guns were brought to bear, to minimise the loss of life and rout the rebels out. Many such houses were perfect arsenals, to say nothing of the rifles and ammunition buried underground which our men were constantly turning up in all directions. It was to put an end to this state of things that General Caneva ordered the clearing of the oasis. The people have all been brought into the town, travelling in caravans, cattle and all, their goods and chattels borne by camels. Those who had not time to bring things away at once have been sent back again to fetch them, escorted by Carabinieri.

Hundreds of Arabs on whom suspicion rested were transported to Italy, to return when the war is over. Those who remained neutral during the revolt were left in the town, the women and children being quartered in the mosques, where food, drink, and medical assistance were supplied them in abundance. Several Arab prisoners, selected for their strength, were punished in a useful, if curious, way, being set to work to build and strengthen trenches. A squad of them

were attached to my battalion, and I noticed, to my great surprise, that they worked with extraordinary good-will and energy. They were natives of Fezzan, of athletic build, and, stooping over their shovels all day long, half-naked and streaming with sweat, they appeared perfectly content with the strange fate that brought them, our enemies, to raise our fortifications for us.

Since the 27th a Commission has been formed, including Hassun Pasha, the Mayor, for the examination of the prisoners. They are all kept at the expense of the Italian Government, and their property guaranteed and guarded by Carabinieri, who scour the oasis in all directions day and night. Even the money and valuables found on them have been collected and deposited in the Bank of Rome at Tripoli. There has not been a single case of looting, thanks to the perfect discipline throughout our army. It is more than possible that during the fighting in the oasis jungle some woman or old man or child may, here and there, have been killed; but one must take into account the condition of affairs between the two engagements, and the just wrath of troops who had to face assassins instead of enemies, and saw the tortured bodies of their brothers-in-arms, treacherously murdered. It is unfair to invoke, as certain foreign correspondents have done, the

tribunals and laws of war on behalf of people who have no claim to be considered belligerents, and who raise the flag of massacre.

The repressive measures were of short duration, and I have no hesitation in saying they were insufficient; as, for many days since, in spite of all the arrests and condemnations to death, rifle-shots have been heard in the oasis, and men of ours have disappeared, in all probability murdered and made away with.

The Italian soldier is kindly hearted and quite incapable of cruelty: he bears no grudge, and is quickly moved to pity. Not a single act has occurred which cannot be paralleled from the history of any colonial war, English included. The action taken has never exceeded the strict necessities which the defence imposed, as the Arabs themselves are the first to admit. Our crime, if such it be, has been the crime of trustfulness and good faith. Treachery has surprised but not vanquished us. Henceforth we shall know what we have to face. A little war has become a great one: that is the long and short of it.

CHAPTER XII

THE SHOOTING OF A CAVASS

In the days immediately succeeding the revolt in the oasis, about 1,500 Arabs were arrested, and many of them sent away to Italy. One hundred or so of them, found guilty of assassination, were executed, but not one of them was put to death without being properly tried, as is proved by the following instance.

During the Arab rising in the town on October 23, the Cavass, or Military Agent of the German Consulate, treacherously stabbed, as has already been mentioned, a wounded artilleryman whom he met in the street. He was brought to justice, and the trial, which took place by court-martial, resulted in his being condemned to the penalty of death by being shot in the back. The condemned man was a young Moor named Hussein Ben Aked Lummalid, a native of Fez. Short of stature, but keen-eyed, with protruding lips and a somewhat snub nose, he is a typical specimen

of his race. Wrapped from head to foot in his voluminous barracan, he appears completely indifferent. Only now and again does he turn a dazed look around, as he makes his deposition through an interpreter, describing himself as "Consular Military Agent, of the Mussulman faith." We soon discover, however, that he understands Italian quite well. The Clerk of the Court reads out the indictment of wilful murder brought against him, and then the presiding officer asks what he has to say in his defence. The prisoner, standing upright, motionless, boldly answers in Arabic: "I have done nothing."

Producing a dagger, the President inquires: "Do you recognise this weapon?"

"Yes; it's mine."

"And you stabbed the soldier with it, didn't you? Have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing," is his curt reply.

The officer responsible for bringing the case before the Court, Captain Castoldi, of the Carabinieri, then confirms his report with fresh details.

"Do you understand?" inquires the President.

"Yes; but it's not true," says the Arab.

"It *is* true," the captain insists.

"You liar! You coward!" is Hussein's cool retort.

Then witnesses are called. The first is a little

girl of fourteen, an eye-witness of the scene, who describes what took place clearly and minutely, with much gesticulation, corroborating the charge in detail. An aged Arab is the second witness. He swears by Allah that he saw the prisoner, with a weapon of some sort in his hand, rush on the poor wounded soldier, but did not actually see him strike any blow. The third and last witness is the Arab Ben Salem. He gives corroborative evidence of having seen the Cavass run up to the soldier, who was unarmed, and a moment later make off, his dagger dripping with blood.

"Well, you have heard what they say?" asks the President again.

"I did go up to the soldier, but it was not I who killed him." This was all he said.

When the witnesses had been dismissed the Public Prosecutor, dwelling on the brutal nature of the deed, demands that prisoner be condemned to be shot in the back. Hussein stands stock-still, as unconcernedly as though these words had no reference to him. Silence reigns throughout the crowded Court.

Then the counsel for the prisoner, an Italian captain, speaks in his defence, urging that he acted without full consciousness of the wrong he was doing. The Court retires, the crowd mean-

while discussing the affair. In half an hour the Bench returns, and the President reads Hussein's sentence of death, asking whether he understands, and has anything further to say.

"I understand, but the verdict is unjust. May Allah protect me!" is the condemned man's answer, as he resumes his statuesque attitude.

When the Governor's signature has been obtained the sentence is at once carried out in the square near the sea-front adjoining the Castle. The condemned man is led there by the Carabinieri, and surrounded by a troop of soldiers with fixed bayonets. He walks with rapid steps and head erect, disdainful; with an air of utter indifference, which might be set down to cynicism, did one not know to what excesses the fanaticism of these Moslems may lead. Hussein is made to sit down on a seat, to which the Carabinieri tie him. Afterwards he is lifted bodily and placed on a great bundle of closely compressed hay, close to the castle walls, with his back to the file of ten soldiers who are to carry the sentence into effect. One of the Carabinieri approaches him again, and covers his face with a corner of the barracan. Then, as the last man leaves him, there follows a moment of deep suspense. The officer, lowering his sabre, gives the signal to fire. Three volleys are poured into him; then his head sinks on his

breast, his body sways over to the left and falls heavily on the sand. A surgeon hastens up to him. The scene, never to be forgotten, is over. There for a time the murderer's dead body lies, face turned towards the blue calm of the sea, while all around a throng of terror-stricken Arabs discusses the heavy but well-merited punishment—a lesson to them all to respect and fear Italians more in the days that are to come.

. . . . .

A hundred or more rebels, arrested for carrying arms or guilty of the murder of Italian soldiers, have been tried by court-martial and condemned to death. Originally the death penalty was carried out by shooting in the back, but we found, to our amazement, that the Arabs went laughing to execution, as if they were going to a festival. The following incident is very typical:

A squad of soldiers was conducting a band of ten condemned Arab assassins to be shot in a lonely part of the oasis. The melancholy procession was just reaching its destination, when it was attacked in the rear by a smart rifle-fire. The surprised Italians turned their arms on their assailants and pursued them for about a hundred yards. When they got back, incredible as it may appear, they found the condemned men still standing on the

spot where they had left them, waiting with the utmost indifference for the death sentence to be carried out. One of the Ulemas and a leading citizen of Tripoli explained to the Italian staff the Arabs' scornful indifference to being shot. He only fears death by hanging, because he believes that, if he dies in this way, his soul cannot escape from his body through his strangled throat, and remains still tied to earth instead of gaining that Mahometan Paradise which he hopes to attain by slaying with savage delight the infidel Christian. Since this incident, the staff that sits in judgment on assassins has decided to hang them all. The condemned men and the Arabs in general were positively terrified to hear of this decision; and since the first moment when a body was seen hanging from the gallows set up in the market place, not a shot has been heard from the rebels still in hiding, while every day the number increases of Arabs who humbly wish you "Good evening, good Italian," as they pass.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BRIGANDS OF THE PRESS

In Tripoli, besides the brigands of the oasis, we had a number of brigands of the press.

The severe measures adopted by the Italian authorities to quell the revolt gave certain pro-Turkish foreign newspaper correspondents in Tripoli the opportunity of charging the Italians with unnecessary cruelty and with the indiscriminate massacre of women, children, and non-combatants. So that Italy found herself in the painful position of seeing her soldiers massacred by the Turco-Arabs and of being herself at the same time wrongfully charged with unnecessary cruelty by certain foreign—and more especially English—journalists.

It is as well to acknowledge at the outset that the war correspondents of the better-class English papers never compromised their dignity as conscientious journalists by forwarding exaggerated or purely imaginary reports of so-called Italian acts of cruelty. This infamous campaign was

H.E. GIOVANNI GIOLITTI

Italy's Prime Minister and greatest statesman, to whom the occupation of Tripoli is largely due

carried on with shameful persistence by the kind of inferior papers which offer as one of their main attractions the publication of sensational news. This in no wise detracts, however, from the grievousness of the insult offered to the honour of the Italian army by these papers, which by their ill-considered action have deeply disturbed the traditional friendship between the two countries.

There exists in London a peace-at-any-price party, insignificant in itself, but which exercises a not inconsiderable influence, and was led, until quite recently, by the well-known visionary, the late William Stead. There are others also who possess a powerful control over Turkish finance—in a somewhat disturbed condition at present, by reason of the war. And there is, lastly, the usual multitude of humanitarian faddists at all times ready to gush into hysterics over the death of any European insect.

The Ottoman Empire is an eternal invalid who has discovered in these three sections of the English people his most efficient physician, and instead of taking up the war on the battlefield with daring and dignity, has flung himself at the feet of England, crying out for protection.

His humble and desperate cry has been heard by the three aforesaid English parties; and those war

correspondents who have persistently accused the Italians of cruelty to the Arabs have stated what is untrue and have incurred the grave responsibility of misleading the public, probably under the influence of the financial group whose conscience is the barometer of the Stock Exchange. It was absolutely necessary for the selfish convenience of these speculators that the Italians should be cruel to the Arabs and lose ten, twenty, or even a hundred battles; and so, according to them, they will continue to lose battles as long as there is any necessity to keep up the price of Ottoman Bonds, only being permitted a slight success occasionally, when some influential financier desires to buy the same cheap. It is not to be expected that the tender affection of Englishmen will be lavished on the Turks for nothing; and the latter in turn, who are constantly getting the worst of it in Tripoli, make up in this way for their losses, winning victories in London and all the other European capitals.

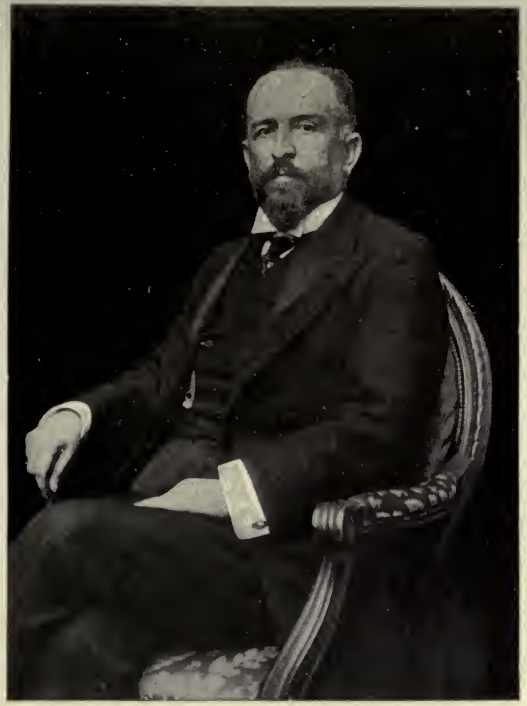
The aim of the sentimentalist and peace parties, however, in their anti-Italian campaign, is to rouse the indignation of the neutral Powers, and urge them to an International Conference for the purpose of putting an end to the war in the interest of the Turks. These, and these only, were the objects of all the lying paragraphs sent

from Tripoli and Constantinople concerning so-called Turkish victories and Italian massacres, more especially after the events of October 23 and 26. Reports were sent from Tripoli, and subsequently repeated at an anti-Italian meeting in London, that for four Italian soldiers wounded by accident [*sic*], 4,000 Arabs were wickedly slaughtered. Bogus telegrams from the Turkish camp turn the Italian victories into defeats. Some have sent photographs of Arabs, killed in fair fight, and the half-penny illustrated newspapers have labelled them, "Peaceful Arabs Slaughtered by Italian Soldiers," or "Innocent Women and Children Massacred by Italians," knowing well that the white burnous which conceals the bodies of the dead will prevent the English reader from distinguishing whether the corpses are those of rebel assassins or innocent women. One English adventurer with the Turks went so far as to send a telegram to London, stating that "England should put a stop to this war in the name of Christianity." Two books recently published on the war by two journalists are so full of inaccurate statements and insults to Italy that *The Evening Standard* of April 21, 1912, said of one of them: "miserably inadequate" and "incoherent," adding: "if it is to be read at all, it must be read at once." One and all of these pro-Turkish journalists are more

or less connected with the three aforesaid groups—pacificist, faddist, and financial—and have no claim to be taken seriously or believed by English readers who really desire to form a true and clear idea of this important war.

To the list of these scribblers may be added the one other whose experiences have been strangely mingled. This man, who had been a tramway conductor, a sailor, a miner, a detective, an actor, on the outbreak of war turned newspaper correspondent, and reached the Turkish camp. Not satisfied with serving the Turks with his pen, he one day led a force of Arabs on a reconnoitring expedition towards the Italian trenches, and was shot down, paying with his death his love for the Turks. It is through such journalists and adventurers that Italy, and her fine army, have been maligned, and England deceived.

These journalists have at times had recourse to absolutely unworthy methods, in order to help the Turkish cause and run down the Italians. Last November, for instance, a memorandum was circulated throughout London concerning the so-called Italian atrocities, signed by presumably three English war correspondents. When Mr. O. Davis, of *The Morning Post*, one of the three journalists, returned from Tripoli and heard of this circular that bore his name, he indignantly denied in *The*



H.E. THE MARQUIS OF S. GIULIANO

Italian Secretary of State for the Foreign Office; lately Italian Ambassador in London

PRINCE DI SCALEA

Under Secretary of State for the Foreign Office

Times having ever signed such a document or witnessed any Italian acts of cruelty, and protested against the unwarrantable use of his name. A similar thing happened to the French journalist Paul Tristan, of the *Journal de Marseille.* On his return from the Turkish camp to France he was amazed to find that several telegrams, which he had never sent, announcing brilliant Turkish victories, had been published over his signature. Correspondents who were proved to General Caneva to be the cause of mischief were, naturally enough, expelled from Tripoli by his order, and this made them so furious that, when they got back to London, they continued to attack Italy and her army at anti-Italian meetings, in the press and in books.

At one of these gatherings held on November 21, 1911, at the Memorial Hall, with the late Mr. W. T. Stead in the chair, such astounding statements were made against the Italian troops by a Turcophil journalist just expelled from Tripoli that there were several interruptions by the audience, and cries of "Order!" "Order!" Pamphlets were distributed gratis, entitled "The Italian Horrors"; and in the House of Commons a small group of members interested in Turkish finance, actually asked questions of the Foreign Secretary as to the desirability of English intervention in the war.

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A petition was also sent round which, by dint of much pushing, received the signatures of a few dozen members of the two Houses.

All these efforts on the part of the Turcophil party in London failed to alter the attitude of strict neutrality maintained by the British Government towards the two contending Powers. This is as it should be; but there is still a danger lest this campaign should change to some extent the good opinion which the English nation has of the Italians as a people of high civilisation, and possessed of a first-rate Army and Navy. From a keen love of historic truth I here affirm on my honour that the Italians in Tripoli never abused the force at their disposal, or acted cruelly to the natives, and that, in quelling the rebellion in October last, they were far less severe than other European armies have been under similar circumstances in their African and Asiatic Colonies not so many years ago. Mr. Stead himself, who took the Italians so severely to task for their supposed cruelty to the Arabs, in order to show the severity of his own countrymen towards native rebels, published in the *Review of Reviews* of January, 1889, an illustration in which Indians are seen tied to the muzzles of English cannon about to be fired. Even Lord Roberts, in his well-known book, "Forty-one

Years in India," reminds us that the Indian mutineers were executed by the hundred, by cannon-shots, on the recommendation of General Chamberlain, who considered such a lesson necessary as a salutary warning to the rest of India. Nay, more, in the same book, the Field-Marshal tells how one of the most distinguished British officers, Hodson, seized and put to death the two sons and grandson of the King of the Moghuls. It is necessary to recall this incident, as it is sufficient in itself to prove to what extremes English severity has gone in repressing mutiny in the Colonies, and what little right certain journalists and M.P.'s have to inveigh against the necessary strictness of Italian measures for a like purpose. On page 137 of the same book Lord Roberts writes:

"The last of the Moghul Emperors had taken refuge in Humayun's Tomb, about seven miles from Delhi, where, on the afternoon of the 21st, he surrendered to Hodson, on receiving a promise from that officer that his own life and the lives of his favourite wife and her son should be spared. Hodson brought them all into Delhi and placed them under a European guard in a house in the Chandni Chank, thus adding one more to the many valuable services he had rendered throughout the siege. I went with many others the next

day to see the King; the old man looked most wretched, and, as he evidently disliked intensely being stared at by Europeans, I quickly took my departure. On my way back I was rather startled to see the three lifeless bodies of the King's two sons and grandson lying exposed on the platform in front of the Kotwali. On inquiry I learned that Hodson had gone a second time to Humayun's Tomb that morning, with the object of capturing these princes, and on the way back to Delhi had shot them with his own hand—an act which, whether necessary or not, has undoubtedly cast a blot on his reputation. His own explanation of the circumstances was that he feared they would be rescued by the mob. My own feeling on the subject is one of sorrow that such a brilliant soldier should have laid himself open to adverse criticism. Moreover, I do not think that under any circumstances he should have done the deed himself, or ordered it to be done in that summary manner, unless there had been evident signs of an attempt at a rescue."

It would almost appear as if those Turcophil M.P.'s and those war correspondents who telegraphed to all the world the well-deserved punishment of a few dozen Arabs caught assassinating wounded soldiers in the Tripoli streets, and firing at the men in the trenches from the rear, are so wanting in culture as never to have

read the great English Commander's book, with which every well-educated Englishman should be acquainted.

Certain English newspapers have also termed the Italian expedition to Tripoli an act of international brigandage, forgetful of the fact that the great British Empire has been built up at the expense of fifty different nations, the Italian included. In short, the attitude of that section of the English press which has laid itself at the disposal of the Turks is greatly to be deplored. Fortunately for the dignity of English journalism, the most important and influential papers have taken no part in this shameful campaign. On the contrary, their correspondents have often contradicted from Tripoli the defamatory telegrams sent by penny-a-liners. Take, for example, *The Times* correspondent from Tripoli, who writes on November 10, 1911:

"There can hardly be one reasonable man anywhere, and certainly not a single soldier, who will not acquit the Italian Army of the charge of inhumanity. It is in fact to an excess of humane feeling that much of the trouble was due which befell in Tripoli on the fatal 23rd of October."

At this point I desire to quote the views of the most famous general, of the greatest statesman,

and of one of the most popular English novelists with regard to these rumours of cruelty—Lord Roberts, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and Mr. Richard Bagot. The first-named answered to a journalist who asked his opinion on General Caneva's action after the Arab insurrection:

"No soldier with some experience of war will put any credence in the reports that women, children, and non-combatants were deliberately killed by the Italians. It may be that in the act of clearing the hostile villages some innocent people suffered with the guilty, but such things are unfortunately inevitable in war time."

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, in *The Morning Post* of November 23, protests against the conduct of those English journalists who send fantastic reports of Italian cruelty, and says:

"I wish to express my utmost indignation at the scandalous attacks in a portion of the British Press on the Government and Army of such a friendly nation as Italy, which proceeded from misinformed or prejudiced observers, who were careful to conceal the provocation on the other side and the treatment of Italian troops who fell in the field. Englishmen should always gratefully remember the attitude of the chivalrous Italian

nation during the South African War, when the British Government and the British Army were the objects of a similar campaign of mendacity waged by several English newspapers now attacking Italy. It is a matter about which I feel very strongly."

Mr. Richard Bagot, the well-known novelist, who usually spends some months every year in Italy, writes in *The Spectator* of November 25:

"General Caneva was compelled to administer a very necessary lesson to Arabs guilty of the most dastardly treachery and of the most revolting acts of barbarism perpetrated on wounded officers and men from whom they had received nothing but extraordinary kindness. The truth is that throughout their dealings with the Arab population of Tripoli the Italian soldiers have behaved with almost unexampled generosity, kindness, and chivalry. Any one possessed of the slightest knowledge of the Italian character must know that while tenderness to children is one of its most salient points—a tenderness which is apt to be carried to excess—brutality to women is so rare, even among the lowest and most vicious of the population of the towns, as to arouse the fiercest indignation when any example of it comes to the popular knowledge. I should like to ask why the

testimony of General Caneva, who is a humane and high-minded officer and a gentleman in every sense of the word, supported as it is by the official denial of the Italian Prime Minister, by letters from officers and private soldiers, and lastly by Arab chiefs themselves, are not to carry more weight with the English?"

Lord Willoughby de Broke, in a speech of November 13, 1911, at Bristol, on foreign politics, said:

"There has been a tendency in England to criticise the behaviour of Italy in the war against Turkey for the conquest of Tripoli. Many of these criticisms are based on information of very doubtful authenticity, and on a complete ignorance of the motives by which the Italian Government is inspired. We ought to remember that Italy was our best friend at the time of the Boer War, when all the rest of Europe was hoping for a disaster to our arms. It is very easy to prate of humanity and play the sentimentalist when one is resting comfortably at home; but it is infinitely more difficult when one is surrounded by a treacherous and barbarous foe, as in the neighbourhood of Tripoli. The English Government has done well to reject the attacks on Italy. There is no reason to believe that the late expressions of hostility to the Italian policy

represent the serious views of Englishmen as a whole."

The opinions here quoted were not sufficient for some English correspondents; nor the denials of Signor Giolitti, the Italian Prime Minister, and General Caneva; nor yet the evidence to the contrary of well-known journalists like Jean Carrère of the Paris *Temps*, and Wickham Steed of *The Times*. No, their one idea was to benefit the Turks at Italy's expense, by any means, however shameful.

The insult offered to the honour of the Italian Army has naturally aroused a deep feeling of indignation and sorrow all over Italy, where people always expected to find in the British nation friends to be relied on. The consequences of an insult, however small, are almost incalculable, because it at once gives rise to suspicion, and provokes in response all the passions and variations of temperament of which men and races are capable. Italians are justified in thinking that the moral assistance rendered to the Turks by a section of the English press, and the material aid given to the "Red Crescent" service, without mentioning the contraband of war which passes daily across the Egyptian frontiers, have strongly contributed to encourage and pro-

long the fanatical resistance of the Arabs, who are led to believe by the Turks that they are protected by England. The immediate result of the pro-Turkish campaign, by the reports spread of Turkish victories, has been to raise once more the national feeling of the Arabs throughout Africa against Europeans. In fact, a revolt broke out in Tunis on November 7, 1911, which cost many European lives, but was fortunately crushed by the application, by the French authorities, of martial law and the arrest of some thousand Arab rebels, many of whom were sentenced to death. More or less unrest has also been noticed among the Mahometan population of Egypt, culminating in a very serious conspiracy of the Nationalists against the Khedive, Lord Kitchener, and the Prime Minister of Egypt. Many arrests were made in June, 1912. Lord Kitchener has thus been compelled to adopt more strenuous measures for the preservation of public order and the suppression of the smuggling of war material across the Egyptian frontier. In Fez also, during the latter half of April of this year, a real Arab rebellion has broken out, forcing France to organise a military expedition for its repression, now amounting to about 40,000 troops. It seems absolutely incredible that from England, with her 80,000,000 Mahometan sub-

jects, this flood of sentimentalism should have arisen, exciting the fanaticism of the Arabs, not only against Italy, but against Europeans in general.

The Turks well knew they could make no stand against Italy without the Arabs' help; but what procured them the natives' co-operation, in spite of their long-standing hatred against the Turk? Nothing in the world but those European newspapers, and more especially the English ones, which stirred up the Arabs' religious fanaticism, giving them reason to hope that the European Powers, with England at their head, would intervene and drive Italy out of Tripoli. In this craft the Turks are pastmasters; and by contriving to stir up the Arabs to a Holy War they have completely altered the military situation, making it far more serious for Italy. Why, then, this hostility to a nation which is waging war not merely in her own interest, but for the sake of the supremacy of Europe in Northern Africa, and of Christianity over Islam? Such an attitude can only have the effect of prolonging hostilities, of encouraging and multiplying the enemies of Italy.

The duration and results of this war depend on the probability or otherwise of a reawakening of Islam, and this reason, too, should be enough

to prevent the English press becoming a prey to baseless sentimentalism. Does England think it fair to assert that the Arabs have a right to rise and attack the friendly Italian Army in the rear, while another hostile force is attacking it in front? English history teaches that revolts have always been crushed by such measures as those adopted by Italy in Tripoli, and by such only, whatever sentimentalists and others may say to the contrary. All men deplore the continued frequency of wars throughout the world, but no one has the right to expect the Italian army to commit suicide rather than defend itself in a way adopted by all European armies in times of danger.

I earnestly desire to call the reader's attention to the serious harm caused to England by the anti-Italian papers of London, which, in order to support selfish party interests, are destroying the sincere and time-honoured friendship which binds the two countries together—a friendship all the more valuable to England because, as a Mediterranean Power, she cannot fail to lose by having a hostile Italy in that sea which Italians of to-day dream of once more baptizing "Mare nostrum," after the fashion of their Roman forefathers.

Mr. Richard Bagot, in his recent book, "The

THE HON. V. COTTAFAVI

Italians of To-day," rightly says: "And so, for my last words in this little volume, I will turn to one who uttered them wellnigh four centuries ago; and who, with Dante, shares the glory of being the world's greatest poet since classic times:

> '. . . let
> A Roman and a British ensign wave
> Friendly together.'"

CHAPTER XIV

THE ITALIANS ASSUME THE OFFENSIVE

The comparatively small number of troops we had at the front suggested, as I said, after the battle of October 26, to our commanding officers the desirability of contracting our lines of defence, and restricting them on the eastern flank to the line of Feschlum—Shiara-Zaniet, a circuit of a mile less than before. The enemy, taking every advantage of the cover and intricacies of the ground extending for nine miles and a half into the eastern oasis, made repeated, and almost daily, attempts to attack the new trenches, but was repulsed on each occasion. In one of these assaults they succeeded in bringing up five pieces of artillery towards the coast, just where it projects into the sea in a small headland known as the Hamidié Battery, which forms the outer boundary of the spacious bay. This battery lies at a distance of only two miles from the town, so it is not surprising that a gunshot or two reached the latter. It was an easy matter for the Italian ships

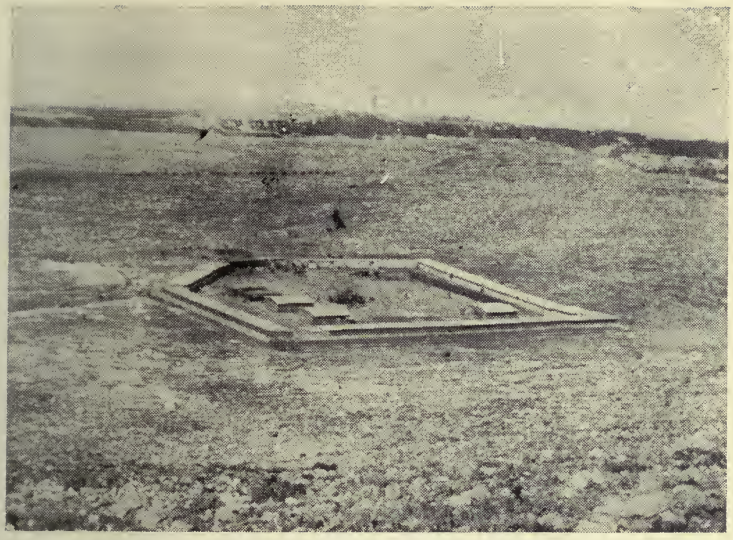
to return this fire, and eventually dismount or otherwise put out of action these guns. The Turks, however, still retained possession of the position for a few days, and their repeated attacks in the immediate neighbourhood of the town produced a condition of affairs intolerable both materially and morally. The position was aggravated by the fact that this voluntary contraction of our lines, following what was, after all, an undeniable Italian victory, gave the Turks the opportunity of trumpeting abroad to the foreign papers, for ever on the look-out for news of the kind, a false report of a forced retreat on our part, making it appear as if we were undergoing a sort of siege and were obliged to yield foot by foot the strong ground that we had only temporarily taken up.

The arrival of fresh troops from Italy procured the overtaxed battalions a very necessary rest, and for several days they never left the trenches; but when additional defence works had rendered the position strong enough to resist the attack of a greatly superior force, it became desirable to make any repetition of these ineffectual but extremely irritating assaults in the vicinity of the town impossible in future. A combined movement for the capture of this outlying headland, judiciously planned and effectively carried out, attained the desired result

The assault on this position was led, on November 6, by General Felice de Chanrand, with the fresh brigade which had arrived only two days previously from Italy, consisting of the 18th and 93rd Foot and two batteries, one of mountain and the other of quick-firing artillery. The resistance of the Turks and Arabs stationed there in considerable force was completely futile; and equally futile were their desperate attempts to make a counter-attack with both infantry and artillery, in the endeavour to drive back the Italian brigade. They were repulsed and routed with heavy loss.

. . . . .

The long-hoped-for moment has come. To-day it is the Italian troops who, after a month of defensive fighting, are to assume for the first time the offensive. A preliminary movement forward is carried out with order, rapidity, and great boldness. On the extreme left of our eastern front our positions are backed by the Tombs of the Caramanli, which crown a cliff abruptly overhanging the sea. It is on this flank that the forward movement begins—under cover, at first, of the trenches occupied by the 3rd battalion of the 63rd Infantry. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon dark masses of troops gather behind the Cara-



FORTIFIED CAMP OF ALPINE SOLDIERS DEFENDING DERNA

CLEANING THE ARMS AFTER THE BATTLE FOR THE CAPTURE OF FORT HAMIDIÉ

manli Tombs. They seem to swarm round silently, like ants, with many others waiting in reserve on the road that winds up from the town along the sea-front. By 2.30 all is in readiness. The 93rd pass across this line of outposts, sweeping over the cliff, along the hilly ground, and pushing steadily on towards Fort Hamidié. The movement is carried out in first-rate order, the men advancing squad by squad in Indian file at the double, taking full advantage of the shelter afforded by the inequalities of the ground, and passing skilfully from cover to cover. They form into small, close knots behind every knoll, but keep right on, pushing forward, while the ships open fire with their lighter guns on the oasis that lies in their immediate neighbourhood. In a few short minutes all the edge of the cliffs, towering bare and brown, seems covered with our men advancing to the attack.

Between the Tombs of the Caramanli and the Hamidié Fort, lies the English Cemetery, a white-walled garden thickly planted with trees. The attacking line is almost in touch with the cemetery enclosure when it is met by a fire from the Arab outposts, who fall back and raise the alarm. The resistance now becomes fiercer. Barricaded in stronger force inside the houses surrounding the fort, entrenched behind walls and concealed

in hollows of the ground, they fire volleys and then fall back under cover, slackening their efforts for a moment to resume them more fiercely a few yards farther back, as they rejoin the main body. The battle gradually rolls inland, receding from the coast, and sways to the right—on into the oasis. The Italian attack continues as vigorously as ever. The men no longer advance by squads in Indian file, but in open skirmishing order, stopping to deliver their fire whenever any cover admits of a momentary halt, making quick rushes across the open and firing again as they push ever farther and farther ahead. And they have only just landed, be it remembered, and this is their first fight. But a spirit of keen rivalry spurs them on, and it was with loud hurrahs that they received the intelligence this morning that to them had been allotted the post of honour in the impending fight. At 3 o'clock a hot rifle fire is raging all along the line. The 18th Foot, which forms the reserve and is listening, with keen eagerness to join in, to the roar of battle along the front, receives orders to send up a battalion to strengthen the attack on the right. This battalion, in its advance, opens out like the rest. A mountain battery is meantime pushed forward by the sea—a long caravan of mules that files close by the edge of the cliff, making for our extreme right,

and then pressing on quickly to take up a position near Fort Hamidié and strike up a deafening fire. Its shrapnel bursts on those points where the enemy lies snugly hid among the palm trees. The attack swings sideways, forming a wedge between the sea and the flank of the slowly retreating enemy. The fort, which formed the objective of to-day's attack, has been already abandoned by the enemy and now lies 400 yards to our rear. The opposing force, numbering some 1,800 men, was surprised by the suddenness of our attack, but nevertheless keeps up a fierce defence for several hours as it continues to retire. The Turkish artillery, losing the range completely, fires volley after volley in wild confusion, not knowing where to aim, and showers of shrapnel fall on the Caramanli Tombs, which our troops have long since quitted. The air is alive with a furious hail of projectiles, whizzing iron fragments that rebound off the tree trunks, whistle through the foliage, skim the walls, and fly on fiercely, howling as they pass. The front line has done wonders. These men, who are under fire for the first time, advance like veterans, developing correct and decisive attacks in true Japanese style. In a workmanlike manner they dig themselves trenches under fire from the enemy.

At sunset the battle comes to an end. As twi-

light comes on one of the military dirigibles passes at a height of over 3,000 feet, disappearing seawards, and as the shadows lengthen the men make their preparations for resting in comparative tranquillity on the ground that they have won. There is a confused sound of pickaxes, as they open out passages and bore through walls; companies file off in the darkness to occupy fresh posts of defence, and orders pass in undertones. A rifle-shot or machine-gun's rattle is still heard here and there, fired at the last groups of the enemy in flight towards the hill of Henni and the Messri Fort, where the main body has taken refuge after the defeat. And citywards, along the roads all crowded by the troops in reserve and blocked by horses, guns, and service-wagons, a great triumphant shout runs from mouth to mouth and sweeps cheerily onward into the heart of the town until it reaches the Governor's Palace, bearing the good tidings of one victory more.

CHAPTER XV

OUR LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

"Wherever a man's post is, whether he has chosen it of his own will, or whether he has been placed at it by his Commander, there it is his duty to remain and face the danger, without thinking of death, or of any other thing except dishonour."—SOCRATES.

A TOUR of the outposts is perhaps the most interesting excursion the world has to offer at this moment. Our trenches round Tripoli run for many miles, from a Kubba to a Mosque, and from thence to another Kubba. The great Mahometan dead are thus ranged in line with us.

Every day towards Sidi Messri the roar of cannon accompanies the rattle of the rifles. The Turks have concentrated in some force to attack this point, and their artillery pounds away at it vigorously. The defence here is entrusted to us Bersaglieri of the 11th Regiment.

If the enemy's fire is not heavy we do not trouble to reply. Bullets come whizzing into the trenches and bury themselves in the sacks with a

sharp ping, whilst we go on talking and glancing inquiringly from time to time across the breast-works. Men even find time to write letters home. One corporal, showing me a letter that he had written recently, said: "I've written to tell my mother that I'm attached to the Commissariat Department, and have to write letters in an office at Head-quarters miles away from the fighting. Why should I make the poor soul anxious? She'd fancy I was running all sorts of risks if I told her I was at the trenches." And he added that after all it wasn't so bad here; he, who had seen so many of his comrades and officers die in these two battles!

There's a spot where a path ends close to our trenches that the Turks are for ever sniping at. No sooner do they see anybody on that path than they let fly at him. My men have made a straw dummy dressed in a tunic, and with a helmet stuck crossways on his head, and a lot of fun is got by sticking him up on the trench. There's a perfect hurricane of shots each time he makes his appearance. The men roar with laughter as they make him jerk his arms and legs about like a marionette. The dummy, riddled through and through with bullets, bows, seems to say "thank you," dances and bobs ludicrously about, and then slowly retires. Yesterday was very hot. I went up to a soldier

who was engaged in cutting a beautiful lemon, and asked him where he had gathered it. He smiled, and was about to answer, when he suddenly moved away from me and fell to the ground. A bullet had passed through his left arm and buried itself in his heart. Do you suppose that the occurrence upset the men in the trenches? Not a bit of it. They raised the body, removed the watch and other trinkets to send as keepsakes to his mother, who vainly waits in a Sicilian village her boy's return, and tenderly laid out the corpse. Then, digging a grave, they placed their dead comrade within it, and, standing a moment in reverent silence, filled it up.

"Poor Paul!" said one of them, "his turn to-day, and mine to-morrow!"

Then they all went back to their posts. The enemy was a long way off. Death comes with silent steps, and when it strikes, the sudden blow is scarcely felt.

This is how the Italian soldier dies. The unending rifle fire is occasionally accompanied by shrapnel, which never does the faintest harm. First you hear the hiss of it, and then the explosion, and after that is all over comes the roar of the firing of it, and the smoke is seen rising far away in the distance. This inversion of the sounds has the oddest effect. One doesn't think at the time

of the physical reasons why this should be so, why one gets the contents of the shell first, and subsequently hears the detonation; and so one is rather taken aback. Our guns retaliate, with long intervals of silence. As one battery wakes up another goes to sleep, and so it goes on all day and every day.

Such is life at the outposts, and it serves to ripen the men's heroism for the next battle, which cannot be very long in coming: a life of waiting, stern and strenuous, in which Italian manhood is being tempered, like a blade of finest steel.

CHAPTER XVI

CHOLERA AND FLOODS

After the fight for the recapture of Hamidié on November 5, the Italian commanders decided to make a farther advance, reconquer the important positions of Henni and Fort Messri to the south of Tripoli, and sweep the oasis clear of the enemy as far eastward as Cape Tagiura. The torrential rains, which continued uninterruptedly from the 12th to the 19th, necessitated a delay in the carrying out of this plan, as they rendered any movement impossible.

Added to this, the cholera, which had already made several victims here and there before the landing of the troops, spread with terrible rapidity during November. One of the chief causes of it was the contaminated water of the wells round Fort Hamidié, into which the Turks had cast the dead bodies of those Italians who fell in the first two battles, after first decapitating and horribly mutilating them. No news reached

Europe of the presence of this fell disease among the Italian troops, because the censorship strictly forbade any report of it, as likely to create a painful impression among relatives and friends at home; but I may mention here that no less than a thousand of our soldiers perished of it in less than one month.

For this reason, as well as on account of the flooding of the oasis, it was quite out of the question to think of an immediate advance, and this additional fortnight's delay in the trenches gave our old friends of the Turcophil press the opportunity of charging the Italians with strategic incompetence, and even with cowardice. For all that, it was not a time of idleness. The men were fully enough occupied in getting rid of the disease, reconstructing the trenches which the flood had destroyed, and clearing the Tagiura oasis.

In effecting this latter object the ships were of great assistance, and aeroplanes and dirigibles also helped, by indicating to the artillery the enemy's exact positions. The villages round Henni and Am Russ especially were heavily bombarded, and their inhabitants compelled to flee towards Tagiura.

The flood descended on our trenches at Bu-Meliana and Sidi Messri with all the cunning of a savage foe. It gave no warning, but came

creeping up in the dark, stealthy and silent, penetrating and encroaching everywhere. It did its best to surround us and cut off our retreat, and, flushed with hopes of success, attacked us from all sides, roaring and foaming as it rose ever higher and more alarming.

Strangely enough, the alarm of its approach came, as in the case of the Turkish attacks, from the outposts, by whose cries of warning hundreds of lives were saved. It was due to the overflow of Wadi Megenin,[1] a stream the existence of which was unknown to us yesterday, and which has in this startling manner forced itself on our geographical memory. In these latter days of ceaseless downpour it has swollen enormously, and, on the night of November 16, made an irresistible attack on us with its muddy waters.

The darkness was intense, and rain was driving in furious gusts. The squall caused among the dark mass of palm trees in the oasis a shrill, dismal wailing sound, peculiar to these stiff-leaved trees when lashed by the wind. At each fresh sweep of the storm the whole oasis heaved and swelled convulsively, its foliage torn to shreds, hurling forth into the night howl after howl, in the majesty of woe

It was a night to be remembered. In Europe such elemental fury, amounting almost to a

[1] Wadi = River.

cataclysm, so intense was it, is practically unknown; but in these torrid climes everything runs to extremes, whether of calm or storm, fertility or barrenness.

Suddenly, distant shouts were heard. They came from the advanced posts, where voices were yelling something which the gale prevented us from catching. The sentries on the outworks fancied for a moment that the Turks were coming, and, throwing their wraps aside, dropped their rifles in readiness to fire, peering out into the dark.

Rain lashed their faces, and, through the roar of the storm, a faint rippling sound of water lapping round the trenches reached them. Then a great shout arose of "Help! Look out, the flood is coming!" In the pitchy darkness no one had noticed that the ground in front of the trenches was already under water. Through our defence works the waters swept, making their entrance no one knew how.

I was lying on a little heap of straw, dressed and armed, as we have always been since the day we first entered the trenches. I sprang out of my tent, calling to my men: "This way! Back, back! Make haste!" The men, who had remained at their posts till they heard my word of command, followed me, splashing through the

water, which rose to their knees, on to dry ground.

"Is everybody here?" I asked them. "Who is missing?" It was impossible to distinguish them, so they called one another by name. The sentries and outpost men were wanting; they either could not or would not quit their posts. The danger made no difference to their discipline.

Some of them had been surprised in their sleep inside a closed tent. The water was still rising; they were unable to get out, and shouted for help. Lieutenant Vitrelli, of my battalion, a strong swimmer, jumped in half dressed and swam out in the dark, steering by the sound of their voices. On reaching the tents he dived down in the muddy water, ripped open the canvas with a knife, and set them free. He was only just in time. The water rose so rapidly that ten minutes later the camp had disappeared. Five-and-twenty minutes in all sufficed for this.

There still remained the sentries and outposts to rescue. Vitrelli, myself, and two privates swam out to the place whence our men were calling for help. They had climbed the posts that hold up the barbed-wire entanglements.

"Courage, lads; cheer up!"

"We can't swim, sir."

"Can you hold on where you are?"

"Yes, sir, but if it comes up any higher we're goners!"

"Well, stop where you are, and sit tight. We'll be back again with a raft in a jiffy. Don't let go!" And back we swam, hand over hand.

The Sappers had come running up meanwhile with torches and planks, out of which they soon rigged up a raft. It was 2 o'clock in the morning. The raft, bearing some of the Engineers and myself, was pushed out into the flood by men up to their necks in water, and afterwards by long punting-poles. A rope, held by men on shore, was tied to it, to secure its safe return. It was like some weird scene of shipwreck. The men to be rescued were ten in number, and had all managed to hold tight to the posts until we reached them. They were thoroughly numbed with the cold, and had to be taken to hospital, where they, however, soon recovered.

When day broke, dull and stormy, an extraordinary sight was seen. A great river, sprung up as if by magic, was flowing, swift and muddy, through the desert. It soon began to overflow, flooding field, garden, and palm grove, wiping out roads and pathways as it made its way towards Tripoli, and discolouring the sea for miles out. The Bread Market and other parts of the town were accessible by boat, and a number of war

correspondents, who were living in those parts, made use of a raft to go out and get lunch, landing, after a thrilling voyage, at an excellent Italian restaurant, quite recently opened near the Castle.

In this emergency the Engineers did wonders. When the alarm first broke out, and the suddenness of it, in the stormy darkness, might have caused disastrous confusion, every man of them, from the Major down to the latest recruit, displayed the same spirit of self-sacrifice and daring and the same splendid discipline to which our successes in battle are due.

It is no new river, but an old one returned to life again, the Wadi Megenin, a stream that runs only during the short period of heavy rains, and then vanishes. It varies in size and direction according to the season. Sometimes it is a brook, sometimes a torrent. It rises in the Tarhuna Mountains, has a course of nearly thirty miles, and falls into the sea by Gargaresch to the north of Tripoli.

The Romans were acquainted with it, and had studied its ways so well that they succeeded in taming and making use of it. In the wide valleys of Tarhuna they built enormous reservoirs, traces of which still remain, and the waters of the Megenin, like those of the Nile, were dammed up

to irrigate this extraordinary country in times of drought. But, first under the Arabs and now under the Turks, this river has been left to the blind forces of chance, with the result that it occasionally causes disastrous floods. Among the many other necessary works of improvement, Italy will undoubtedly have to arrange for the regulation of this strange river.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BATTLE OF HENNI

(*November* 26, 1911)

THE daily skirmishes, the engagement of reconnoitring parties, the detached artillery fights, and interchange of rifle-shots at the trenches day and night, wherever a clump of palms enables the Arab marauders to approach unseen and fire their haphazard volleys at us—the whole exasperating game, in short, of guerilla war, that has gone on for the last month and proved of much service in training our soldiers, ceased on November 26, when the Italian Army assumed the offensive with decision and success.

The accompanying map will give a good idea of the positions of the two armies previous to the battle. We were drawn up in a horseshoe formation extending from Hamidié, past the Caramanli Tombs and Feschlum, to Sidi Messri. The Turks occupied a line almost parallel to ours and about

a mile away, backed by Shiara-Shiat, Henni, and Fort Messri.

General Caneva, having made sure by means of reconnaissances by aeroplanes that we had little to fear from an attack on our western and southern fronts, decided to attack the enemy here, where they had massed a considerable force, and storm Fort Messri first and then Henni, compelling them to evacuate the oasis. The assault on Fort Messri was entrusted to the 6th Brigade under General Nasalli-Rocca, consisting of the 23rd and 52nd Regiments of Infantry, supported by the 50th Foot and two squadrons of the Lodi Light Horse, with two mountain and two field batteries. Henni was to be attacked by the Alpini of the Fenestrelle battalion, our 11th Regiment of Bersaglieri, two battalions of Grenadiers, and the 18th and 93rd Foot. The advance movement was to be supported by the heavy guns of six men-of-war.

At 6.30 a ragged volley was opened on the advance guard apparently from some very broken ground; the clamorous prelude to the coming battle. The men are already on the move, cheerful and festive, and express their delight at being able at last to go and attack the enemy in his own trenches. Nasalli's entire brigade on the right begins to extend and advance on Fort

Map of the
BATTLE OF MESSRI
26th Nov. 1911.
Red Fort
Lighthouse Fort
Harbour
Governor's Castle
Ft Hamidieh
to Tagiura
93rd Inf.
Sciara Sciat
Am Russ
Fort Sultana
Aviation Park
Fort A
Fort B
Fort C
Grenadiers
Feschlum
Henni
Bersaglieri
Alpini
Messri
Cavalry Barracks
Bu Meliana
Gurgi
from Zanzur
Fonduco
from Garian & Azizia
from Garian & Azizia
from Garian & Azizia
Fort Messri
Fort D
50th, 23rd & 52nd Infantry
1st Reg.t Lodi Cavalry
to Ain Zara
Fornaci
MENSCIA
Oasis.
Italian Battleships.
Carriage Roads.
Italian Trenches before the Battle.
Turkish line of Defence before the Battle.
Italian Trenches after the Battle.
Direction taken by the Turks in their Retreat.
Scale
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometres.
0 1 2 3 Miles.
Turkish Camp
Ain Zara

Messri. The sun is up, and the recent rains have reduced the desert, where there are hollows in places, to a succession of small muddy lakes, through which still run the waters of Wadi Megenin. Several battalions of Nasalli's brigade have to ford great pools of water up to their knees in mud.

Meanwhile the Turkish artillery has marked our advance from Fort Messri and a place known as the "Kilns." Some of the enemy's infantry are posted inside and around the so-called School of Agriculture. Awaiting events, I climb a palm tree to watch the fight proceeding on our right. After half an hour's firing the Turks are forced back in the direction of Fort Messri, a massive building, with a round reddish tower much battered by our artillery. Nasalli's battalions continue to advance and press round.

From the Fort a tongue of flame keeps shooting rapidly, and a little cloud of shrapnel falls over our comrades, but each time it explodes at too great an elevation. By the time the bullets reach the ground they must be cold. Between Fort Messri and the Agricultural School a white flag marks the ambulance post. A shrapnel shell explodes in close proximity to it, and then another and yet another. The Turks are firing on the wounded!

A heavy rifle fire strikes the Fort in all directions, as our men draw nearer and nearer still. Then, in

a moment, a troop is detached from one of the front battalions, with the regimental colours at its head. From where I am I can clearly see it advance at the double, then disappear behind a sand-dune and reappear again. It is now right under the Fort. Bayonets flash out, and white-helmeted Italians, Arabs in barracans and brown-uniformed Turks are mixed in wild confusion. It is a hand-to-hand struggle.

My Bersaglieri, hearing how the fight progresses on the right, are furious because they cannot join in, and shout excitedly; "Go it, go it! Good old Infantry!" We can hear the crack of the rifles, rattling thick and fast as the last tussle comes. Ten minutes more and the sturdy assailants are already on the ramparts and the Tricolour floats over the desert, with the enemy in full retreat towards Henni.

It is now 9 o'clock. Our Colonel, who is to lead the advance on Fort Henni in the oasis, exclaims, as soon as he hears that the right is successful: "Now it's our turn." His order ran as follows: "At 9.20 our front will make an attack on Henni, supported on the left by the Grenadiers and the 18th and 23rd Foot, and on the right by the Alpini of the Fenestrelle Battalion." Then he rides along the trenches, issuing short instructions to the commanders of battalions, merely saying to

the men : " Bersaglieri, remember the gold medal ! " [1] A loud " Hurrah ! " is their reply, and up go the plumed helmets into the air.

The men are overjoyed, and eagerly await the word to advance, cracking jokes with one another. Exactly at twenty minutes past the hour we burst through the openings in our trenches, squad by squad, and double into the oasis, forming in skirmishing order. Amongst the trees and foliage there is a general rush of men, passing from wall to wall, from ditch to ditch, stooping, watching, silent and ready. There is no joking now, but a quiet exchange of words in undertones, as they peer through the trees and listen, drive loopholes through the garden walls and hack down the fleshy cactus leaves to clear a prospect. A word is enough to make them forge ahead.

Meanwhile, in the background, along the roads and footpaths, the reserves are pushing up to occupy the trenches we have left. The mules of the mountain batteries break into a trot, one behind the other, and the slow train of ammunition wagons plods steadily on. Squad keeps well in touch with squad, company with company, battalion with battalion, and the entire line of attack forms one long chain that stretches its huge length in spite of

[1] The King of Italy conferred the Gold Medal for Valour in War on the 11th Bersaglieri and 84th Foot, for their distinguished bravery during the battles of October 23 and 26.

every obstacle. Though not more than twenty or thirty men are visible at a time, the chain runs on unbroken, as though the 15,000 men that form it were advancing hand in hand.

From one command to another messages pass on. The engagement of a single company of Grenadiers stops the entire advance till it is over. With perfect unity of action the great line sweeps on like some huge net. Houses are entered without a word of warning, walls climbed, courtyards burst into, and every nook and corner rummaged. The wells, in which the Arabs are so clever at hiding themselves, are closely inspected and their pulleys removed.

The first shots are heard when we are still only about 300 yards from our trenches, but, as yet, the resistance is not serious. Our determined advance has taken the enemy by surprise: they are only daring when in concealment and invisible. They fire now and then from behind some distant hedge and then retire, and little bands of them may be seen running away through the trees. Not unfrequently a shot from one of us stops their flight for ever. A hundred paces away from me some fifteen barracans appear behind a well, and scamper off to scramble over a low wall, but six of them are stopped short by our rifles and fall like so many white logs of wood.

As we hurry on, a swarthy face peeps from behind a wall. The good man has stayed behind, no doubt, to pick up the rifles of his fallen comrades. A rifle-shot in the eye sends him straight to Allah. We press on 200 paces farther, to where the oasis becomes less thick.

We know that the walls of those houses, in which arms and ammunition are concealed, are marked by the Turks with a triangle. These places formed regular depôts for facilitating operations in the oasis, and in them now dazed Arabs take refuge, offering when discovered a short but desperate resistance. A big gun is brought to bear on these extempore strongholds. Its shells gut the places completely, and, before the smoke and dust have cleared away, our men are on to the surviving defenders.

The gunners in this unusual form of advance are almost in the front line, and mount their pieces at 100 paces from the enemy. The big guns terrify the Arabs. The Grenadiers have surprised a whole lot of them, led by a Turkish officer and barricaded in a mosque. After a hot resistance, the place had to be blown up with nitroglycerine, and few were the lucky men who escaped destruction.

The 93rd Foot, in its march from Fort Hamidié to Shiara-Shiat and Henni, was forced to bombard

house after house. They discovered heaps of the enemy's dead, many of whom had been killed by the shells from the ships. To their furious indignation, our men found dead Arabs dressed in Italian uniforms stolen from Bersaglieri who fell on the 23rd. It seemed to them a contamination, a vile sacrilege, and they longed to hunt down and put to death the flying traitors.

All this time we have been making for the hill of Henni that now gleams yellow in the distance among the scattered palms. Here, for the first time, we meet a serious resistance from the Turkish Regulars, who, well covered behind high trenches, pour a hot fire on us. We have got to within 300 yards of them without losing a single man, so well have my men availed themselves of every scrap of cover. It was almost like a manœuvre on the drill ground.

The gunners protect our advance, but, nevertheless, Turkish shrapnel begins to explode on our temporary entrenchment, wounding one or two. At last the enemy is forced back on to another line of trenches at the foot of the hill. By 12 o'clock, my battalion has reached the line previously fixed on for the whole front to halt and rally, before tackling all together the last phase of the engagement, viz. the assault of the hill itself, on which the Turks are massing for a final stand

We wait the arrival of all the other battalions, who have been engaged more or less seriously on our flanks. The men are resting, and we officers are sitting on the grass, sharing our lunch with some reporters who have forgotten to bring their own, and listening to the crack of the rifles and machine-guns, which reaches us like the clapping of some enormous mysterious audience.

At 2 our strength is completed by the arrival of the Grenadiers, and the final advance begins. My battalion is received by a sharp fire from a long trench parallel to our front, and a fresh fight breaks out between us and the Turks. We have taken up a position behind low walls and, as yet, have not succeeded in dislodging the enemy from his excellent cover. Time slips by, and we receive news of the advance of the other contingents on Henni. The trench now occupied by the enemy is the final objective of our battalion.

At 3.30 I give an order that rouses the Bersaglieri's spirits: "Fix bayonets! Prepare to charge!" Almost immediately a loud resounding shout sweeps over the ground and is heard a mile away, firing those who hear it as with a great blaze of enthusiasm. On from our cover to the enemy's trench we charge, yelling the war-cry

"Savoia!" The oasis becomes a mass of Bersaglieri, rushing on in glorious confusion.

The mere uproar of our charge has struck dismay into the enemy. They discharge a volley or two in frantic haste and then take to their heels, while Bersaglieri plant on this last trench the Italian colours, produced goodness knows from where. Panting, perspiring, red in the face, my men are beaming with content and laughing, their eyes all aglow with enthusiasm, as they rest in the conquered trench, regardless of the fire of the enemy, whose bullets begin to scream angrily, skimming the parapet. "Come, up you get!" I order. "Fill up the sacks and make loopholes. And let two or three men, who can shoot well, return their fire carefully." But the men only smile without hurrying, sure of themselves, and saying: "Let the beggars come. We'll jolly well give them the boot!"

A little later other battalions arrive on the skirts of the hill from all directions. As the men advance in fighting line, they exchange reminiscences of this place. The name excites them, and they shout out "Henni! Henni!" But Henni makes no reply, and the advance continues. Two battalions of Bersaglieri, one of Alpini, and one of Grenadiers, converge on the Fort. "Steady! Take cover!" we officers shout, dreading some

unpleasant surprise; but the men are impatient, and, the moment they gain the slope of the bare hill, their bayonets are already fixed.

Luckily for him, the enemy has already fled before we get there, for our troops charge to the summit with an irresistible rush. Bersaglieri, Alpini, Grenadiers, all jumbled together, burst into shouts of "Viva l'Italia!" and for some minutes the men are in a state of intense excitement. Work begins on all sides, as the sun goes down. There are fresh trenches to dig and new defence works to make, while here and there the last shots from the enemy's rearguard die away past the "Kilns" in the direction of the oasis of Ainzara, far out in the desert eight miles from Tripoli.

General Caneva, who was present throughout the engagement, arrives on the hill, heartily congratulating both officers and men. He inquires of some of them if they are tired, but they are all ashamed to say "Yes," even if they are, and stoutly deny it. And to-night these same men will be manning the trenches without knapsack or blanket, ready to return the enemy's fire when he cautiously creeps up, shoots, and then disappears, as his custom is. The Turco-Arabs cannot face an open attack, realising our undoubted superiority in courage, as in race.

AFTER THE FIGHT

Work is in process at all the freshly won positions. Defence works are being run up, trenches dug, emplacements prepared for heavy and quick-firing guns, covered passages and entrenched roads cut. Swarms of men are hard at work. Over their heads from time to time pass rifle-shots, that have no more effect on them than rain, and do not even interrupt their conversations. The shots come from Arabs, led by Turks, left hidden in the oasis to spoil our full enjoyment of the victory.

Squads of squalid Arabs, escorted by our troops, come to dig graves for the dead or burn them, and wreaths of smoke among the palm trees mark these melancholy funeral fires. Turkish troops are found amongst the corpses in the proportion of about 20 per cent. This shows that the Arab bands are led by Turkish privates and non-commissioned men acting as officers. We reckon the enemy's loss in this battle at about 1,500 put out of action. On our own side, we had 3 officers and 54 men killed, and 5 officers and 92 men wounded.

It is difficult to estimate the enemy's losses with any certainty, as they only leave their dead on the battlefield when it is practically impossible

TRAP-HOLES AND BARBED-WIRE ENTANGLEMENTS WHICH PROTECT THE ITALIAN TRENCHES

to remove them. With heroic unselfishness the comrades of the fallen men drag them away from under fire, sometimes taking them upon their backs and running off, bent under their sad burden. In each engagement we have witnessed this dutiful removal, which we always recognise with a temporary truce.

I well remember one day seeing an unarmed Arab have the courage to approach our trench alone, holding up his hands in sign of surrender, and then suddenly stoop down, pick up a dead body and make off. The dead man was a Turk in brown uniform, probably an officer. Like all Orientals, they dislike leaving their dead in the hands of an enemy, fearing that mutilation or disfigurement which they themselves practise. Their innate ferocity passes the bounds of life, and they imagine a like ferociousness in others.

We have found, here and there in the oasis between Shiara-Shiat and the Fort of Henni, where the enemy had been encamped, several dead bodies of Italian soldiers fallen in the fight of October 23. These bodies have been treated with fiendish atrocity. The heads have been cut off, and the bodies themselves hacked about and unspeakably mutilated; eyes have been torn out, and lips, nose, hands, and feet cut off. It is impossible to describe the ghastly condition of these corpses, discovered

by us to-day, after a month's time, on our way to victory.

The intolerable sight of this mutilation has lit in every heart a blaze of fury, in which horror is mingled with disgust. Our men would not allow the Arab grave-diggers to touch them, but interred them with their own hands, religiously and in silence, shaking their fists the while at the runaway murderers. Every man felt an overpowering desire to take up arms there and then, rush on the enemy, as on some evil beast, and pin him to the ground with the point of the bayonet. A vague, inarticulate, but mighty voice came to the soul of each, crying "Vengeance, vengeance!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TURCO-ARABIAN ATROCITIES

Even so great men great losses should endure.
SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Cæsar.*

THAT readers of this book may not question the absolute truth of the facts here set forth, from the diary of Major B. M., I leave the account of this horrible carnage to two of the best-known foreign journalists, Gaston Leroux and Bennett Burleigh, who witnessed it with their own eyes.

The famous French novelist here mentioned, Special Correspondent in Tripoli to the Paris *Matin*, sent the following telegram to his paper on November 29:

"I was present at the interment of the mortal remains of many Italian soldiers who had fallen prisoners into the hands of the Turks and Arabs, and been by them barbarously massacred. These Bersaglieri who fell on October 23 died not merely as heroes, but also as martyrs. I cannot find words to express the horror which I felt to-day, when we discovered these luckless remains in an abandoned graveyard.

"In the village of Henni, inside the Arab burial-ground, had been perpetrated an absolute butchery. Of the eighty ill-starred men whose bodies we discovered there, there is no doubt that quite half had fallen alive into the enemy's hands, and that all had been carried to this place, surrounded by walls, where the Arabs knew they were safe from Italian bullets. There took place here the most vile and loathsome carnage that can possibly be imagined.

"The victims' feet were cut off and their hands torn from their bodies. Some of them were crucified. The mouth of one was split from ear to ear; a second had his nose sawn off; others had ears cut away and nails torn out by some sharp instrument. Finally, there is one who has been crucified and whose eyelids have been sewn up with pack-thread. When one remembers that but two hours previously these heroes had generously shared their rations with the Arabs who subsequently tortured them, one cannot but experience a feeling of unspeakable indignation and disgust.

"I saw in that burial-ground a number of naked corpses, over which great spiders, toads, and flies were crawling. But luckily for humanity, three hundred yards away, Italian artillery was thundering against the savages, in celebration of victory. Never shall I forget this day with its contrast of war and peace, of slaughter run riot and well-earned joy."

AN ITALIAN SOLDIER CRUCIFIED ON THE GROUND

"In the village of Henni, inside the Arab burial-grounds, had been perpetrated an absolute butchery"
(G. Leroux, in the *Matin* of Paris, November 29, 1911)

The equally well-known English correspondent, Bennett Burleigh, of *The Daily Telegraph*, the doyen of the journalists in Tripoli and one of the most authoritative in Europe, sent the following to his paper:

"It was near the mosque by the Henni I had my attention called to the bodies of those who had fallen into the hands of the fiends of the desert. Five soldiers, Bersaglieri, had been tied to a wall, crucified as on a cross, and afterwards riddled with bullets. It is needless to dwell upon the nature of the further atrocities which savage Moslems invariably practise on the bodies of Christians. A sergeant had also been crucified, but with the head down, and in the hands and feet were still left enormous nails.

"A little farther away from this mosque a field hospital had been rushed, and every one put to torture and to death—doctors, hospital attendants, and wounded Italian soldiers. Bodies had been torn asunder, faces hacked, and limbs struck off as well as heads. Stakes had been driven into and through the bodies, and the arms and hands had been held apart in the same cruel manner. It seemed as nothing that dozens of victims were mutilated and left upon the floor, the field, tossed into open pits or buried alive up to the waist, wrists broken and hands cut off.

"But worst of all was this. A hospital attendant under the Red Cross, named Libello, of the

sorely tried 11th Regiment Bersaglieri, who also had been crucified, had first had his upper and lower eyelids perforated and laced with tightly tied coarse string. Each eyelid was then pulled, and the cord being tied behind his head, the eyes were held wide open, and could neither be blinked nor closed in life or merciful death. Flies and insects abounded. The look of unutterable horror on the strained face of Libello will remain fixed for ever before me."

Thus wrote Mr. Bennett Burleigh, and, in the face of his evidence, the accounts of so-called Italian cruelties by men of much less experience and authority, only seem the more shameless, infamous, and vile. Other conscientious foreign correspondents also sent home descriptions of the Turkish atrocities, and one of them paid with his blood for his love of the truth.

Jean Carrère, the famous correspondent of the Paris *Temps*, returning home towards midnight on December 1, 1911, from the telegraph office at Tripoli, where he had dispatched a long telegram describing the Turkish atrocities, was treacherously attacked and stabbed at the door of his residence. Luckily, his wounds were not fatal, and he afterwards stated that his assailant was a Turk.

This attack on Jean Carrère with a dagger did

"A hospital attendant under the Red Cross, named Libello, who also had been crucified, had first had his upper and lower eyelids perforated and laced with tightly tied coarse string" (BENNET BURLEIGH, in the *Daily Telegraph*, November 26, 1911)

not surprise us. The Turks revenged themselves in this way on the brave French journalist, who merely told the truth and took no part, as so many others did, in the foul cosmopolitan conspiracy against Italy of certain European papers. I commend this noble victim for the truth to the imitation of those other English correspondents who persistently distorted facts in the Turks' favour.

On them let the weight of the shame fall of having defended the Turks and their hired assassins; the Turks, who encourage the Arab's instinct for treachery; who stand by and take part in the mutilation of Italian wounded and dead; who fire on the Red Cross; who distort their bullets in order to render them more murderous; and who, by unalterable atavism, are driven to assassination.

And, further, let it be known in England that while the Turks massacre our fallen, we treat their prisoners and wounded chivalrously. The latter may be counted by dozens in our hospitals in Tripoli, where they are tenderly nursed. Hundreds of prisoners not wounded are sent to Italy and lodged in special barracks, where they remain under the care of Italian soldiers, but enjoy a reasonable amount of liberty, being abundantly fed, well clothed, and supplied with everything necessary for

a fairly comfortable life. They are taken for walks out-of-doors and to bathe once a week in the sea; they have medical attendance when ill, and can correspond freely with their families.

The officers have even better treatment than the men, and all are allowed the pay that they received in the Turkish Army. Even their religious feelings are respected, and in the barracks where they are accommodated the crucifixes are all taken down, and a sort of mosque erected, where they can attend to their devotions undisturbed. Italian officers and men all treat them with the greatest kindness, and often true friendships spring up between victors and vanquished. It is well that English readers should know all this, and more especially those Turcophil journalists who first sent inaccurate telegrams, and subsequently, in equally misleading books, cast baseless and degrading aspersions on the honour of the Italian army.

. . . . .

The massacre of the prisoners and the mutilation of their corpses were shared in by the Turkish officers and men. Colonel Fara had the uniform removed from one or two Turkish soldiers found among the massacred Italians, as a proof of Turkish participation in the abominable, nameless acts of their worthy allies the Arabs. Turkey's responsi-

bility must be made clear to the civilised world, and the Ottoman Empire bear the weight of its share in these infamous deeds.

Let all men know what savages lurk among this soldiery, which has nothing civilised about it but the cut of its uniform. Enough of this sham masquerading of barbarians, who fraudulently obtain from the nations a reputation for conscientiousness and military honour. Turks and Arabs are all tarred with the same brush, and the Turkish Army in this war, by its participation in nameless crimes, falls from the sphere of honourable warfare and lapses into the criminality of unutterable brigandage.

In the presence of some of the foreign journalists, General Caneva insisted on the photographing of some of the Italian martyrs, to prove indisputably by the camera the truth of published descriptions. And along with the photographs he sent to the Italian Government a detailed report of the gruesome discoveries made after the battle of Henni, backed by abundant proofs. From this report it appears that the Turco-Arabs have:

1. Killed the wounded and outraged the bodies of the killed.
2. Attacked the ambulances and killed soldiers of the Army Medical Corps in the execution of their duty.

3. Used distorted projectiles (dum - dum bullets).

These acts of barbarism are not merely an insult to the whole civilised world, they are also an open violation of Articles 1, 3, and 9 of the International Convention signed at Geneva on July 6, 1906.

Article 1 of this Convention, to which Turkey subscribed on September 3, 1907, runs as follows :

"Men at arms, and all officially attached to armies who shall be sick or wounded, must be respected and cared for, without distinction of nationality, by the belligerent in whose power they happen to be. If necessary, a belligerent compelled to abandon sick or wounded to the enemy, shall leave along with them, for such period of time as military requirements permit, a part of its medical staff and materials to assist in their treatment."

Article 3 of the same requires that :

"After every engagement the army in possession of the battlefield shall take the necessary steps to search for the dead and wounded, with a view to their protection against looting and ill-treatment."

AN ITALIAN SOLDIER NAKED AND WITH THE HEAD SMASHED

"One cannot but experience a feeling of unspeakable indignation and disgust
(G. Leroux, in the *Matin* of Paris, November 29, 1911)

ANOTHER NAKED AND TORTURED WITH BOILING WATER

". . . Dozens of victims were mutilated and left upon the ground, the field, tossed into open pits, or buried alive up to the waist. . . ."
(Bennet Burleigh, in the *Daily Telegraph*, December 1911)

Article 9 refers to the protection of ambulances and medical staffs, and says:

"The staff exclusively charged with the collection, transport, and medical care of the sick and wounded, as well as all medical establishments and clergy attached to the forces, shall be respected and protected under all circumstances. If they fall into the enemy's hands, they shall not be regarded as prisoners of war."

The use of dum-dum bullets is forbidden by the third declaration appended to the final Act of the International Peace Conference, signed by various Powers at The Hague on July 29, 1899, and amongst them by Italy and Turkey. According to the text of this declaration, "The signatory Powers forbid themselves the use of bullets that easily crush within the human body, as in the case of those the hard surface of which does not completely cover the interior or is notched in any way."

That the use of dum-dum bullets is a common practice with the Turks and Arabs is shown by the fact that General Caneva, amongst many other proofs sent to Rome from Tripoli testifying to the barbarity of the enemy, forwarded a case of Mauser rifle cartridges, with bullets cunningly distorted by notches made in the surface. This case was found by a patrol in a house in the oasis, previously occupied by Turks. There is further

the evidence of the Red Cross surgeons, who have repeatedly noticed wounds produced by such bullets.

The Government at Rome and the Italian press, moved by a feeling of respect for the grief of so many families whose sons had been treacherously massacred by a refinement of barbarity on October 23, have purposely abstained from publishing the reports that reached them on this painful subject from the staff in Tripolitania.

This concerted action of the Government and press was no reason why the obvious, systematic, unspeakable outrages on all decent feeling, with which the Turkish-Arabian Army has dishonoured itself, should not be denounced to neutral Governments. From that community of interests which ought to bind together the peoples of the civilised world as opposed to savages, the Italian Government collected in a printed and illustrated pamphlet the proofs of the painful facts, which not merely Italy, but all humanity, must to-day deplore, and forwarded it to all the neutral Governments.

In the supreme interests of civilisation it is necessary that the Powers should know the unheard-of ferocity of the enemy that Italy is fighting, and should take to heart this further evidence that revolutions of a day's duration and the fine speeches of a year or two are not sufficient to eradicate from

the Turkish nation its long-standing practice of barbarity. Italy, who has suffered this great wrong, thus denounces the assassins to the world and avenges its martyrs in a civilised manner.

Yes, we Italians feel, more than ever now, that ours is not only a conquest, but a great work of civilisation. From the day when these atrocities were discovered, we have become the world's emissaries in a sacred cause, fighting and defeating not only the Arabs, but also these ferocious Asiatics, who, after five centuries' contact with Europe, are still brutal murderers. The Ottoman Empire is no more than a mosaic, over which the Turks, strangers to all progressive ideas and feelings, to-day maintain, with hands red with blood, an armed watch as of old on their far-off desert steppes.

CHAPTER XIX

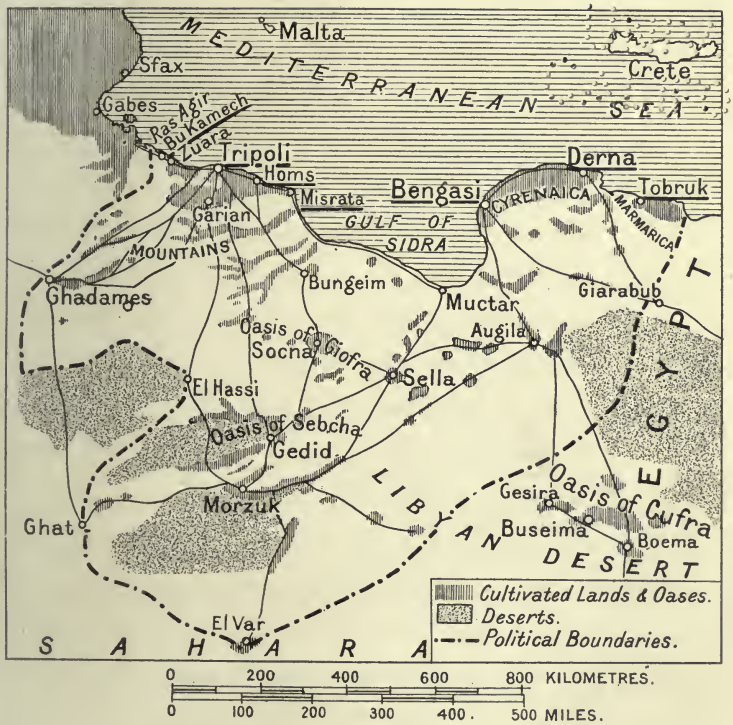
THE GREAT BATTLE OF AIN-ZARA

(*December* 4, 1911)

THE effects of the victory at Henni made themselves felt. The enemy's main body took refuge in the little oasis of Ain-Zara towards the interior, separated from the great oasis of Tripoli by a strip of desert five miles wide. The Arab chiefs of the Tripolitan oasis as far as the Tagiura headland began to tender their submission.

We appreciated the outward sign, but declined to treat with them. At that moment dignity and pride possessed a force destined to make itself felt for all future time, and did more to lay the foundations of our prestige than even the fire of our guns. We refused to treat with these rebellious, ferocious, defeated Arabs. They were sent back to their villages, with orders to await the fate that we should think fit to impose on them.

On our side there is a reawakening of activity, pointing to a plan of action that shall push things



MAP OF TRIPOLITANIA AND CYRENAICA

to a crisis, force the Turks to quit Ain-Zara, and drive them farther into the interior. Our reserves are now all being massed on the second line. The last regiments of reinforcements sent from Italy started for the camp as soon as ever they landed. There are scarcely any troops left in the town. The camp hospitals have been moved nearer the outposts, and wagons and cisterns full of water have also gone to the front.

The men scent the coming battle in the air, and no wonder they are excited at the thought of soon tackling their ferocious enemy once more. To-day, more than ever in the past, owing to the intense and universal indignation at the massacre of Henni, it is certain they will fight furiously to avenge their martyred comrades.

The longed-for day has come. December 4 is the date fixed for the attack on Ain-Zara, which is to be invested by three columns acting in concert. To get a clear idea of their movements, it is necessary to recall the existence of the Megenin River that made its appearance so strangely a fortnight ago. All that is left of it now is the bed, marked by broad stretches of mud dried into cracks, and by a perfect maze of pools and swamps.

The river-bed runs north of Ain-Zara, close by the Turkisk Camp, and then bends towards our trenches in a north-western direction, cutting our

lines just before it falls into the sea. Two of the investing columns were to act on the left of the Megenin against the enemy's western flank in an enveloping movement, and a third, working on the right of the dried-up stream, was allotted the task of attacking them from the north-west with the object of cutting them off from the Tripolitan oasis.

This column, forming the left of the line of attack, was made up of a brigade consisting of the 82nd and 84th Foot and one field battery, and was under the command of General Rainaldi. The central column of the attacking line was formed by a mixed brigade, composed of the 11th Bersaglieri, two battalions of Grenadiers, the Fenestrelle battalion of Alpini, and a corps of Mountain Artillery under the command of General Legnio. On the right of the line was a third brigade, under General Giardina, consisting of the 40th and 60th Foot, one battalion of Engineers, and a second Mountain Artillery Corps, and on the extreme right were two squadrons of the Lodi Cavalry.

The extreme left was occupied by two battalions of the 52nd Foot, with instructions to be ready to advance from Fort Messri towards the Mosque of Bu-Saad, which lies in the oasis opposite the fort at about a mile's distance, and commands a

road leading to the north-east of Ain-Zara. It was expected that the Turks would attempt to retreat by this route, and the 52nd were then to advance and cut off the flying enemy. Such was the plan of attack. The cavalry intended to form the right wing were the first to leave the camp for the advance through the desert.

Day is almost breaking. After the cavalry the battalions of General Giardina's brigade file out. They are to work westward, and surround the Ain-Zara oasis. Then follows our central column. A Staff Officer forms us into marching order, starting one battalion after another, and regulating the intervals between the regiments. He superintends the whole on horseback at the point where the troops leave the trenches, and acts as "Starter" of the battle.

My battalion is the first in order of advance. As the men file past a knot of reporters one of the latter inquires, "Which battalion?" An answering voice shouts, "The Battalion of Iron!" A ripple of laughter passes along the ranks, and jokes are exchanged between the men. The march continues. After us come the Grenadiers, and then the Alpini, a torrent of armed men that bursts out and spreads in many a column, till the whole desert is striped with them.

As we advance we find traces of Arabs on the damp, yellow sand. I stumble over a bundle tied up with a tent rope. On opening it a fine new prayer carpet is disclosed. It is perfectly dry, and can only have been left there a few minutes previously. Turkish scouts must have been there watching our outposts. Doubtless the enemy, put on the qui vive by them, was observing our every movement, and had organised a system of rapid intelligence. In this way the news of our advance passed rapidly from dune to dune as far as the Turkish Head-quarters at Ain-Zara. The carpet is left lying on the sand, and my men tread on it as they pass, laughing at the joke of a corporal, who remarks: "These Turks are really too polite, laying down carpets for us to walk over!"

We were not mistaken; the enemy was on the look-out, and waiting for us. They had stationed several small outposts here and there, who retired when they saw us coming, joining forces to offer the first resistance, and bullets soon begin to rattle in the centre of our far-stretching line of attack. My men coolly take up a position, and answer the fire without haste, aiming well at the heads of a hundred or more Arabs which keep popping up over the crest of the opposing dunes in front of us.

THE ADVANCE ON AIN-ZARA

On our right we begin to hear the rumbling sound, as of cart-wheels in the distance, which a well-sustained musketry fire produces. There also the fight has begun. "Take cover!" we shout to the men, though we remain standing ourselves, looking through our field-glasses. But several of them pay no heed, and fire, kneeling out in the open, watchful and serious. A Bersagliere beside me draws back sharply from the firing line, lays his rifle on the ground, and sits there pressing his shoulder with his hand. "It's nothing, sir," he says to me, before I have time to ask any questions. "I'm hit, but I can go on," and then goes off into a dead faint. They carry him away to the nearest ambulance post.

The brush only lasts ten minutes. The Turks disappear, and our advance goes steadily on over the limitless waste of the sad and solemn landscape. The artillery from Sidi Messri and the big guns of the battleships have now begun to bombard the Turkish positions at Ain-Zara with a succession of deep roars that echo again and again.

The sky is covered with low black clouds, and it is beginning to rain. Uniforms and overcoats are soon soaked through, and weigh heavily on the back. The wet sand sticks to the men lying in the firing line. The blue vault

has vanished; lurid storm-clouds have shut out the sun before it has fully risen, and the desert wears a look of desolation most depressing in the morning twilight.

We soon hit on a long trench defended by some 400 Arabs and Turks, and again the rifles rattle angrily. We can see in the distance other columns of Turks advancing from the camp of Ain-Zara, probably on their way to man more trenches to our left. They form tiny threads, moving across the slopes like insects in procession, and then disappear in a hollow. We shall come across them again later on.

As we still advance a buzz of admiration rises from the men, who point out something to one another in the sky. It is Captain Moizo's aeroplane flying on the storm against the lurid background of the great clouds which the wind whirls and twists. He comes from Tripoli on outspread wings, rising higher and higher, and shooting like an arrow towards the enemy's camp. He passes far above the bursting shells and shrapnel. There is something quivering at the steering gear behind, which turns out to be the national flag.

After a few minutes we see him circling in great sweeping rings over a special point, like a hawk which has sighted its prey below. Five

minutes more and we mark in the far distance, rising from the ground one after the other, in a straight line right ahead of us, eight towering black columns of smoke, like gigantic solitary trees sprung up by magic on the horizon. The master of the sky has sighted the enemy's trenches and bombarded them, vanishing shortly afterwards towards Ain-Zara.

Mounted dispatch-bearers gallop up, bringing information from the other columns and handing on orders, and then start off again, spurring their horses covered with foam and sweat. One of them announces that the enemy is taking up his stand in 800 yards of trench right opposite us in the centre. His horse is wounded in one leg, but gallops on just the same, as if it shared its master's keenness.

Still we go on. The enemy is driven back from trench to trench. They cannot long resist the fire of our artillery and the menace of the enveloping movement. But the Turkish guns keep up their fire and refuse to be silenced. At this point the Krupp batteries posted at the Cavalry Barracks, some twenty or thirty pieces, open fire and pour a deadly storm of lead on the Turkish posts at Ain-Zara. And General Rainaldi's brigade on the right has crossed the marshy belt where the Megenin had poured part

of its waters round our trenches, and we can see, from the height of the sand-dune on which we now are, his battalions advancing at the double and breaking into loose order, as one squad after another pushes onward from dune to dune in sudden rushes, in spite of the enemy's rifle fire, and pouring shrapnel that still bursts too high to be effective.

A dirigible appears over the battlefield and halts above the contending forces at a height of 1,500 yards. It is the F. 3, commanded by Captain Denti. The officers in the car are making signals with a red flag, perhaps to correct the fire of the artillery and of the big guns of the battleships.

"Up with a battery here, against those trenches," orders General Legnio, and the mountain battery advances. The trenches to be pounded are those reported just now by the dispatch-bearer. Our artillery does great execution, the batteries rising to the occasion magnificently. They seem to be everywhere at once, passing quickly from place to place, now in support of the vanguard, now following with the main body.

They get into and out of position with amazing smartness. "Forward the guns!" cries the captain in charge, and the wiry gunners drag the cannon swiftly on to a rising ground. In a few

seconds the first shot is fired, and the gun bounds back with mouth all a-smoke. There is something almost human in these little mountain cannon, crouching on their massive carriages. After each discharge they spring back with a jump, as if trying to get away, and, like obstreperous children, have to be brought back into position by main force.

The first shot is too far, and the second bursts short, but the third strikes the Turkish trench. Having found the range, the whole battery keeps pegging away, whilst the gunners, in the intervals of firing, dig trenches in the sand to screen the guns from the enemy's replies. It is barely ten minutes before we see the Turks in headlong flight, crossing an eminence in their rear and disappearing.

The advance begins again. In the trench that the Turks have just quitted we find a dead man or two and six wounded, one of whom is an officer. The enemy had no time on this occasion to carry off the fallen. So I have the wounded men removed at once to the nearest field hospital, and when the stretcher, on which the officer lies dying, passes by us, I give the order to present arms to the enemy fallen in an honourable fight.

Before us now stretches a sandy waste, rolling smooth and monstrous, and forming a wild and

eerie landscape, like the sea in a storm, with motionless yellow waves, each one of which is a natural trench, and behind which the enemy tries to make a fresh and more obstinate stand. We can see the Turks and Arabs running across those queer symmetrical crests, and then crouching down and opening fire. The sun, which peeps out from time to time from between the big black clouds, shines full in their faces and lights up now a red fez and now a white barracan. They form a curious picture, those long lines of heads that seemed to be spitting smoke. When a shriek of shrapnel passes, every head is instantaneously ducked, producing the most comical effect, as if some one were pulling the string of a child's toy.

Again we advance, still forming the centre of the line, leaving footprints on the dunes as in the snow, and noting the tracks that the enemy has just left. Here the barefooted Bedouins have passed; yonder is the impression of Arab slippers; and here again the deeper prints left by the hob-nailed shoes of the Turk.

Each time that our line advances, and in so doing exposes itself, their fire breaks out afresh; but nothing checks our onward sweep, though here and there a man falls dead or wounded, without a cry, without a groan. A mule laden

with water drops dead with a bullet through it. The man in charge of it unlooses its pack, and remarks philosophically, "Better you than me." Colonel Fara rides behind the ranks, nibbling a hunch of bread and carrying an enormous ship's megaphone, through which he shouts his orders.

On our right General Giardina's brigade is hotly engaged in dislodging a hostile force from a chain of deep trenches, and in repulsing a strong contingent which, with the object of checking our enveloping movement from the south-west round the Ain-Zara oasis, is attempting a counter-attack on the flank of our right wing.

It is noon, and we have already been fighting five hours. The Ain-Zara oasis is now in sight. All at once the sandy dunes become covered with stunted bushes and with grass, now forming downs, behind which palm trees appear. Beyond lies a wide grassy plain, on which the conical tents of the Turkish camp stand out white. A solitary house is visible, and near it stands an enormous tent, pitched at some distance from the camp. Perhaps it is the residence of Nesciat Bey, the Turkish Commander-in-Chief. The Tripoli oasis, far away in our rear, forms just a bluish streak, over which the Italian colours are flying here and there.

Forward again, and this time with a rush. From dune to dune we double, the enemy continually falling back but opposing a stubborn resistance, breaking away in panic at times, and then returning angrily to the struggle. Maybe he thinks our temporary halts are due to his vain resistance, but we are only slackening our pace in the centre to give the right wing time to complete its turning movement.

By this time it is 2 o'clock. We Bersaglieri are massing for a general assault on the last outworks of the Turkish Camp, behind a hill somewhat higher than the rest which commands the entire field of action. We see our right wing converging from the south upon the Ain-Zara oasis, and on the left the battalions of Rainaldi's brigade, pressing onward from the north. The two battalions of the 52nd also, out on our farthest left, have left Fort Messri and are hard at it driving back several hundred Turks, who have fortified themselves in the Mosque of Bu-Saad, with a view to a counter-attack on our left.

Three times the infantrymen have charged with the bayonet against the deadly fire of the mosque's defenders. A mass of walls, some high, some low, form an insuperable barrier to their wildest heroism, and three times are they forced to retire. Not till after three hours of sanguinary

combat do they succeed in a fourth desperate onslaught in breaking into the mosque and routing the greatly reduced force that holds it.

This temporary check at the mosque, aggravated by a counter-attack in considerable force from the same direction and coupled with the attack on our extreme right already described, forced us of the centre to delay our final assault on the camp of the enemy, who thus had time to effect a hasty flight in a south-western direction towards Azizia in the Tarhuna country back in the desert.

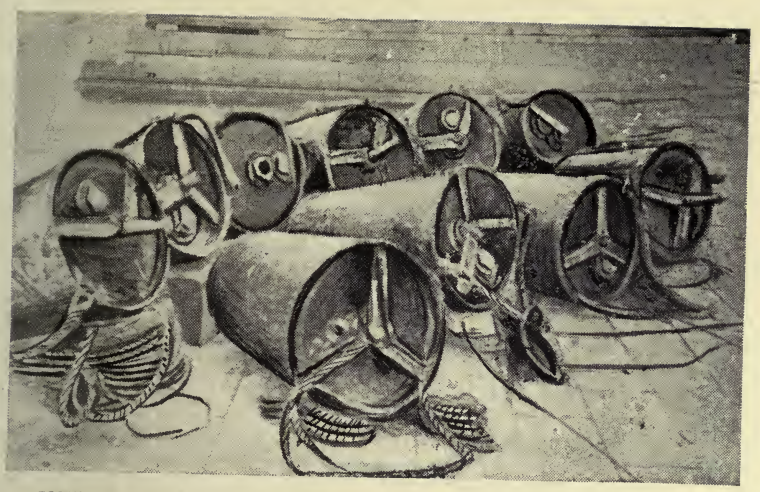
It is 4 o'clock, and we have reached the last stage of the battle. At the word "Forward!" all the battalions of the vanguard advance on a converging line about half a mile long to attack the oasis. The Turkish artillery has ceased firing, and ours also is silent. The immense chain of our 16,000 men comes forward at the double, with the officers in front. The grassy dunes half a mile ahead of us are still covered with Turks, who pour a hurried fire into us as we continue our victorious advance, not returning a shot.

Then, all at once, there is a stampede over the grass and through the bushes; a scuttling of men that fly in hot haste along the sides of the low hills and vanish in the thickets of oasis palms. Their bayonets are fixed, but this is the only sign of determination about them. Did they intend to

meet our assault at close quarters and then change their minds? There is a touch of the comic about soldiers running away with bayonets fixed. A few stray rifle-shots still pop off here and there from stragglers, who delay a moment to fire and then make off again.

It is a startling sight that greets us in the abandoned camp, which we are lucky enough to be the first to reach. On the green grassy dunes, in the trenches, and all around the camp lie hundreds of bodies of Turks and Arabs, one upon the other in places, begrimed with mud and blood almost beyond recognition. Ammunition and commissariat chests and quantities of tools and clothing are scattered broadcast under the oasis trees, amongst fragments of our shells and shrapnel, in a confusion and state of filth as repulsive as the sight of the dead and wounded, whom, in their headlong flight, they have not had the time or the means to carry away with them.

Judging from the vast size of their camp and the accounts of the wounded, the Turks were in greater force than we imagined, certainly not less than 8,000 men. The trenches in the oasis had become mere ditches, in which the water left by the late rains was contaminated with ordure. Our men, after their ten hours' fight, set energetically to work to dig fresh trenches and improve the



SOME OF THE MINES WITH WHICH TURKEY CLOSED THE DARDANELLES

Photo taken by an Italian expelled from Turkey

DOZENS OF BODIES OF TURKS AND ARABS WERE MASSED ALL AROUND THE BATTLEFIELD OF AIN-ZARA

sanitary condition of the conquered Turkish camp. Seven large-bore guns were found abandoned in a trench; they will be removed to Tripoli to-morrow to ornament the terrace of the Governor's Castle.

CHAPTER XX

THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRIPOLI

WHILE the military operations were proceeding in the neighbourhood of the oasis of Tripoli, the town itself was starting on a new and prosperous existence. Those who remember Tripoli previous to the Italian invasion, squalid, muddy, and deserted, stretching its dreary length out towards the shipless roadstead, where only a few small boats from the Levant rocked lazily at anchor, plunged during the hours of night in pitch darkness, displaying the sad poverty of its native quarter—that dumping-ground of all conceivable filth—with its smoke-grimed shops of paltry damaged merchandise, sleepy and hopeless of better things, and who see it again as it is to-day, after only seven months of Italian occupation, tidy, busy, and joyous, its shops, both old and new, teeming with life, and each municipal department in full activity, abundantly supplied with water and electric light, with shipping well organised in spite of its vast harbour traffic, pro-

vided with shelters for the poor, a large model hospital, schools, and a good postal service—in short, with every requirement of civilisation—would surely deem this astonishing transformation hardly possible even in a period of many years, much less in seven short months.

The Algerians, Tunisians, and Egyptians who pour into the new Metropolis every week from the steamers, and who knew the squalid Tripoli of the old Ottoman Empire, are loud in their expressions of wonder at this change, which is assuredly extraordinary when one remembers that it was necessary first to provide for the wants of the 40,000 armed men landed there, and that therefore the needs of the citizens could only, through the stern necessities of war, take a secondary and subordinate place.

In these seven months of Italian occupation the population has doubled, and another city has arisen on the ground occupied by that which the Turks evacuated. It is completely changed. From the Custom-house to the pier, from the eastern limit to the western, through all the main thoroughfares, passes a ceaseless procession of traffic, a busy crowd of traders. Italian warehouses, with signs expressive of the highest patriotism, have everywhere been opened, as well as bazaars which supply almost every possible Italian product, from the vermouth of Turin to

the macaroni of Naples. The number of these shops is increasing every day, and there is not the slightest doubt that when the new harbour, safe and spacious, is complete, as it will be in a year or two's time, Tripoli is likely to become a formidable rival to Tunis.

The American Consul at Tripoli, Mr. Wood, in an official report states that since January, 1912, two large wharves have been constructed in the Port of Tripoli at a cost of £4,000 each, and that the harbour has become the scene of great activity during the last few months. Now an average of thirty steamers and twenty sailing vessels are daily seen in the harbour, besides the naval boats and many smaller craft engaged in the sponge fisheries. The new harbour will have two breakwaters. When the work is completed the port will be thoroughly protected from the heavy storms from the north-east and north-west, and will make Tripoli one of the safest harbours in the Mediterranean. One side of the port will be reserved for the naval ships.

The most important event in the development of the agricultural and mineral resources is the building of a railroad to Ain-Zara and the rich grazing hills of Gharian and the olive district, which lies about eighty miles south of Tripoli. The white labourers on this railway receive 7

NATIVE CAVALRY IN THE SERVICE OF ITALY AT BENGASI

VIEW OF HARBOUR OF TRIPOLI TAKEN FROM THE SUMMIT OF A MOSQUE

francs per day, and section "bosses" 12 francs, while the Arab and negro of Tripoli is earning $2\frac{1}{2}$ francs per day, when twelve months before he was glad to receive $\frac{1}{2}$ franc per day when he could find work.

CHAPTER XXI

HOPELESS POSITION OF THE TURKISH ARMY

After the fight at Ain-Zara the enemy had withdrawn, partly in the direction of Tarhuna and partly towards the mountains of Garian, about forty miles distant from the coast. On December 13 eight battalions occupied Tagiura at the eastern extremity of the great Tripolitan oasis, which thus passed entirely into our possession. After their severe defeat at Ain-Zara the enemy's troops prudently kept at a distance, being compelled to seek fresh supplies of food and ammunition and to reorganise, as well as to obtain what additional forces they could from the Tarhuna and Garian districts.

When they had succeeded more or less in attaining this object, and saw no signs of an advance in force on our part, they once more approached and put into a state of defence the hilly positions at Azizia, some twenty-five miles south of Tripoli, which lent themselves well to

this purpose, their advanced posts occupying ground at no great distance from us. From there they did their best, though unavailingly, to harass the reconnoitring parties sent out in all directions round our fortified camp at Ain-Zara.

Of these attempts the most noteworthy were one during a reconnaissance at Bir-Tobras on December 19, 1911, and a second made on our camp at Ain-Zara on January 28, 1912, both of which were repulsed. Especially noticeable also was a Turco-Arabian raid on Zuara on the coast, about fifty miles to the west of Tripoli. The troops had received orders to scour the country in that direction for the purpose of preventing the Arabs' submission to ourselves, and of punishing those who had so submitted; and these instructions they carried out with a ferocity worthy only of savages, massacring unarmed men, women, and children. A little later they fortified themselves there, and made Zuara their head-quarters for commissariat and refurnishing purposes, drawing large quantities of arms by smuggling from the Tunisian frontier, and forwarding them from Zuara on towards Azizia.

They even had the audacity to ill-treat the inhabitants of the oasis of Gargaresch, which is no

more than four miles from Tripoli. These people demanded our protection, and after a brilliant encounter on January 18, we gained possession of this oasis as well, forming an entrenched camp of it. By now also the oasis of Zanzur, on the west of Tripoli, is in possession of the Italians.

Zuara was bombarded several times by the Italian ships and dirigibles, and, although the little town was all but destroyed, there is still to this day a considerable detachment of Turco-Arabs there. It is one of the few places where there is good anchorage between Tripoli and the Tunisian frontier, but even so it can only accommodate small vessels, the big transports being unable to approach it nearer than half a mile. Here the roads meet that come from Tunis, and from it start good caravan routes for Azizia and Garian to the south. Through it naturally passes a double stream of contraband from the sea and from Tunis.

The fact that it is still in possession of the enemy merely means that we do not wish them to be relieved of the obligation of extending their forces from Azizia to the coast, a length of lines which is a continued source of weakness to them strategically. And to deal a mortal blow to the contraband across the Tunis frontier, the Italian Commanders determined to occupy the peninsula

A HERO OF THE WAR

General Fara (the second figure from the right), who commanded the gallant 11th Bersaglieri. Group of officers taken soon after the battle of Gargaresch (January 18, 1912)

of Macabez, a few miles north of Zuara and Fort Fovra, which sweeps effectively the only caravan route leading from Ben-Gardane on the Tunis coast to Zuara.

The landing at Macabez of a division in charge of General Garioni was successfully carried out on April 10 in spite of the opposition of the enemy in garrison at Fort Fovra. They fled before the assault of the Italians, but returned again and again a few days later, considerably reinforced, to attempt its recapture. On each occasion they were beaten and driven back with heavy losses.

Since our occupation of Macabez, the caravans, which bring fresh supplies and stores of ammunition to the Turks across the Tunisian frontier, have been compelled to follow a curving route, more towards the interior and some 100 miles longer than the original one. Supplies and ammunition are for this reason scarcer to-day than ever in the Turkish camp at Azizia, and twice as costly as before. This, combined with the coming on of the season of drought, will very largely explain why the Turks after their defeat at Ain-Zara never moved out of the positions they had taken up at Azizia.

Meanwhile we have made of Ain-Zara an Italian stronghold of the first class, protecting it with big guns and a regiment of infantry, so that an enemy

five times stronger would still find it difficult to storm. The place has been linked up with Tripoli by an excellent railway, and is looked on as the principal base for future advance movements in the direction of Azizia and the mountains of Garian, where it is probable the enemy will make his last desperate stand, if European diplomatic intervention does not put a stop to the war before the return of the season favourable to an Italian advance.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CAPTURE OF THE HILL OF MERGHEB

(*February* 27, 1912)

As the secure occupation of Tripoli demanded the surrender of Ain-Zara, so was the taking of a lofty hill called Mergheb essential to the safe possession of Homs. On this height, which lies some four miles south of the latter town, the enemy had strongly entrenched himself ever since our landing, and it was from here that all his attacks originated on our works of defence. Mergheb is a very steep hill 700 feet high, which overtops the town. Its summit has always been a well-known refuge of brigands, who, ensconced amongst the ruins of an old Roman castle, defied from this mountain eyrie the Turkish authority. We have taken Mergheb twice over.

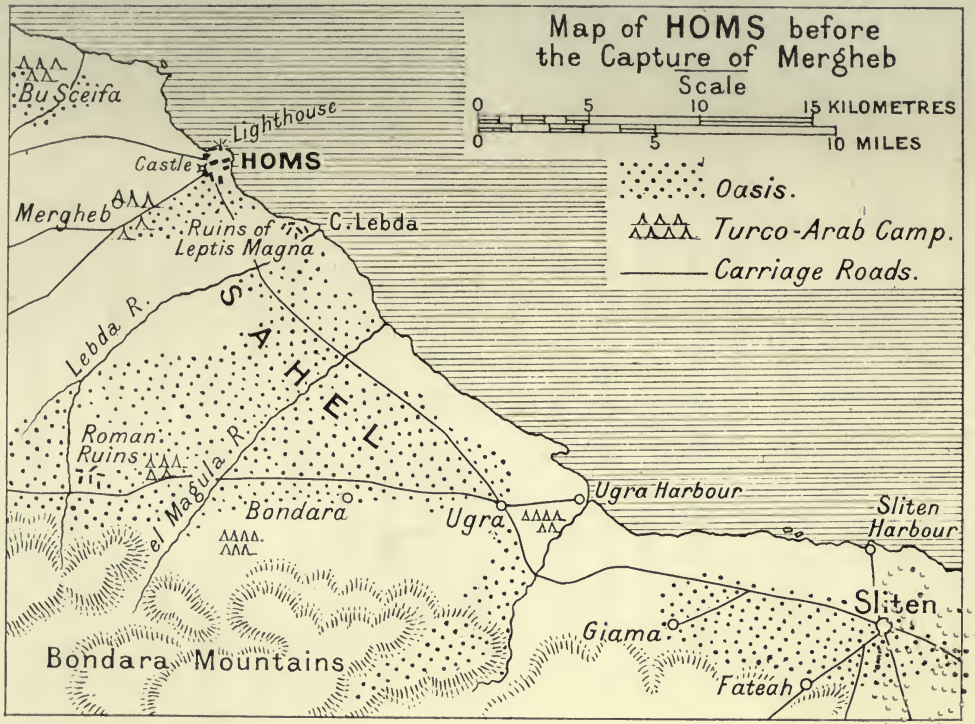
At the time of the landing on October 21, 1911, Colonel Maggiotto with his 8th Regiment of Bersaglieri, the only force at his disposition, attacked the enemy who had sought shelter on the mountain,

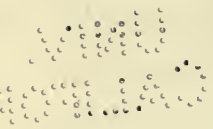
and drove him down after a fierce engagement. The Colonel was unable, with the scanty troops at his disposal, to hold the position, with which it was impossible to keep in touch from Homs. He was therefore compelled to abandon it and confine himself to the town, which he fortified, pending the arrival of reinforcements.

The situation here several times gave rise to anxiety. We often thought, when the enemy made feeble attacks on our trenches in the Tripoli oasis, how they might be massing considerable forces, supported by artillery, on Homs, and perhaps with success. The recapture of Mergheb was necessary to free the place from this constant menace, and became more pressing than ever when the first Turkish guns made their appearance on the hill.

One evening at the beginning of January two shrapnel shells exploded unexpectedly in the town, as though to give warning. The next evening came two more at the very same hour, and so on for some days in succession, with that incomprehensible regularity which has often marked the Turkish gunnery in Tripoli. It was then that a battery of big siege-guns was mounted hard by the lighthouse.

The Turks kept up their fire from the top of the Mergheb Hill, and during the night of January 12


Map of HOMS before the Capture of Mergheb
Scale
0 5 10 15 KILOMETRES
0 5 10 MILES
Oasis.
Turco-Arab Camp.
Carriage Roads.
Bu Sceifa
Lighthouse
Castle
HOMS
Mergheb
Ruins of Leptis Magna
C. Lebda
Lebda R.
SAHEL
Roman Ruins
el Magula R.
Bondara
Ugra
Ugra Harbour
Sliten Harbour
Sliten
Giama
Fateah
Bondara Mountains



sent twelve shrapnel shells on to the houses, one after the other. A terrific fire came in answer from all our batteries of every dimension on land and sea, devastating the enemy's position, and from that time forth the Turkish guns showed no further signs of life.

But the menace of them brought about the arrival of Italian reinforcements. The plan of attack had been previously arranged, and was combined with a naval demonstration intended to distract the enemy's attention from Mergheb. On February 26 one of our warships, attended by a steamer apparently loaded with troops, left the harbour of Homs and made for the east in order to make a feint of landing at Sliten, a point on the coast at a distance of about twenty-five miles. This feint was sufficient to detach a contingent from the main body of the enemy at Mergheb, the defence of which was thus weakened.

Of this favourable state of affairs we took a prompt advantage, and on the morning of the 27th at 6 o'clock the entire garrison of Homs, some 7,000 strong, left the trenches and advanced in a triple column to the attack. The centre column was composed of the 89th Infantry with its quick-firers, the Mondovi battalion of Alpini similarly equipped, one mountain battery, and a half-company of Engineers. The right column consisted of two

infantry battalions, and the left of the 8th Bersaglieri. Two field batteries and one battery of howitzers of 149 mm. remained in position, strongly placed round the town where they could not be seen, and ready to cover the attack.

The scheme of assault was as follows. We were to quit the trenches well before dawn, to give us time to re-form at the foot of the hill in the friendly darkness of the night without being observed. As soon as the van of our columns had reached the foot of the hill, then the artillery in the distance was to pour its thunder on to the crest above and cover the attack. The order was to take Mergheb by storm, and nothing was to interfere with the fury of the onslaught. If the main frontal attack were delayed in any way, the wings were to effect a wide enveloping movement. Major-General Reisoli was in command of the troops.

The absolute silence of the soldiers was a factor of no slight importance at the outset. The first faint glow of dawn was scarcely visible when the lower part of the Mergheb Hill was already black with an extended cordon of troops. A great living chain was tightening round the height and slowly attacking it. Then the first alarm signal went off from the enemy's trenches, a long, wild, guttural cry, accompanied by a few shots from Arab sentinels, who retired after firing once or twice.

We dug ourselves shelter with small spades, while the artillery posted at Homs opened a hot fire on the summit of the hill. It numbered twelve pieces of 75 mm., and six garrison howitzers of 149 mm. The enemy's resistance did not last long before the excellent practice of our gunners. The well-kept-up fusillade rattled on for some time, then every sound was drowned in one giddy, deafening roar. A confused yell of 7,000 voices smothered the crash of the artillery and the crack of the rifles. We swept on to the attack up the grassy hillside, shouting our battle-cry, "Savoia!" The enemy's resistance wavered and began to break.

At this early stage of the fight a Turkish captain was struck down, pierced by two bayonet thrusts. His dress was somewhat loud, including as it did a silk shirt and gold buttons on his tunic. His hands were covered with costly rings, and round his right wrist was a bracelet made of a woman's hair. Over-dressed as he was, he gave evidence of heroic bravery. When our men were pressing round from all sides, and his own were taking to flight, he stood his ground, still facing us, revolver in hand, calm and undismayed, and continued firing on us as we rushed towards him, until a sergeant of the Alpini fell on him with his bayonet and stabbed him twice.

In their hurried flight the enemy left two guns behind, and by 8 o'clock their position was carried. While we were still holding the summit, a field battery came galloping up and pursued the enemy's columns with a murderous fire. In greatly reduced numbers they succeeded in taking cover behind a small hill about half a mile away. There they rallied with the intention of attempting a counter-attack.

From all the neighbouring and distant heights rose dense puffs of smoke, their usual signal for summoning their forces in mass. The alarm was passed from dune to desert dune as far as eye could follow, spreading far and wide the desperate appeal for help. Down the hollows of the far-off gullies rivulets of men were pouring. The knots of the enemy were gathering in strength. From all sides, and especially from Sliten, they came hurrying in to form a single united mass under the shelter of the second hill that lies opposite the formidable position of Mergheb, over which our flag was already flying. In this position they were able to muster, and afterwards to occupy the entire height, overflowing down the sides, and even on to the slope that faced us.

It was now afternoon, and we had been for some time engaged in strengthening our position. The second battery also mounted the hill and took

up position. About 10 o'clock some of our battalions had descended towards the hollow between Mergheb and the enemy's new position.

Massed together to the number of about 5,000, they thought to get the better of us easily, relying chiefly on their skill and habitual swiftness of movement; but they were mistaken. We began rapidly withdrawing our men, and effected a sort of reabsorption of the front files along the flanks of the Mergheb Hill, giving the enemy the impression of a retreat. This induced them to rush furiously to the attack. From the hill on which they had been massing they came down the gentle slope into the valley, and then rushed up towards the summit of the Mergheb, but were met by a sudden awakening of our artillery, which poured a deadly fire on their whole line of attack, riddling them with grape shot at short range, and a raking low-directed fire that skimmed the ground and made a perfect hecatomb of victims.

Great gaps made in their ranks by the shells were clearly visible, and the shoulder of the hill was soon a mass of dead and wounded. Our troops from behind their cover accelerated and intensified their rifle-shots, and all the machine-guns broke into their peculiar metallic rattle, click following on click. The enemy had been cunningly lured within convenient range, and were

mown down in swathes. Towards 3 o'clock we again charged them with the bayonet, the second time that day, and this last onslaught was enough to completely rout them. In their mad, desperate flight they left hundreds of corpses behind them on the field.

In this part of the engagement a private of the Alpini, who had already made a name for for himself at Homs, and won two medals for his brave deeds, distinguished himself greatly. He is an utterly reckless fellow who rejoices in the highly appropriate name of Finimondo,[1] and joined in the expedition as a volunteer. The day before he had succeeded in taking alive an Arab who was firing from behind cover. Creeping cautiously up through trees and brambles, he contrived to spring suddenly upon him and take him prisoner, wresting from him his rifle and eighty rounds of ammunition; then, holding him tightly in his arms, he carried him bodily into our lines, chuckling over his good luck.

He is a man of quite unusual strength. During the second bayonet charge that day on the Mergheb Hill, Finimondo found himself face to face with an Arab chief, who defended himself with a great sabre. He split the Arab's skull with a blow from the butt of his rifle, and then,

[1] Finimondo means "the end of the world."

MAJOR-GENERAL REISOLI

The victor of Mergheb

THE CELEBRATED ALPINE SOLDIER

FIMINONDO

Granted the rank of corporal for his bravery in the field

when the battle was over, picked up his enemy's corpse and carried him calmly and triumphantly back to Homs. Unfortunately, the brave fellow has not a relative in the world to rejoice over his magnificent courage and the affection with which every one regards him.

This second bayonet attack induced the enemy to retire far out of range of our artillery, which continued firing till nightfall. It is estimated that about 5,000 of the enemy's troops took part in the later assault, and of these at least 1,000 were put out of action. Our own loss was 26 dead and 130 wounded, including 2 officers killed and 15 disabled.

The victory of Mergheb has freed Homs and the country for several miles round of the treacherous and persistent guerilla warfare with which we have been harassed for the last four months, the fierce nature of which was owing to the peculiarity of the ground on which it was fought and the dense woodlands on the hills surrounding the towns. Here, as well as at Tripoli, the enemy's boldness and resistance have been broken for ever.

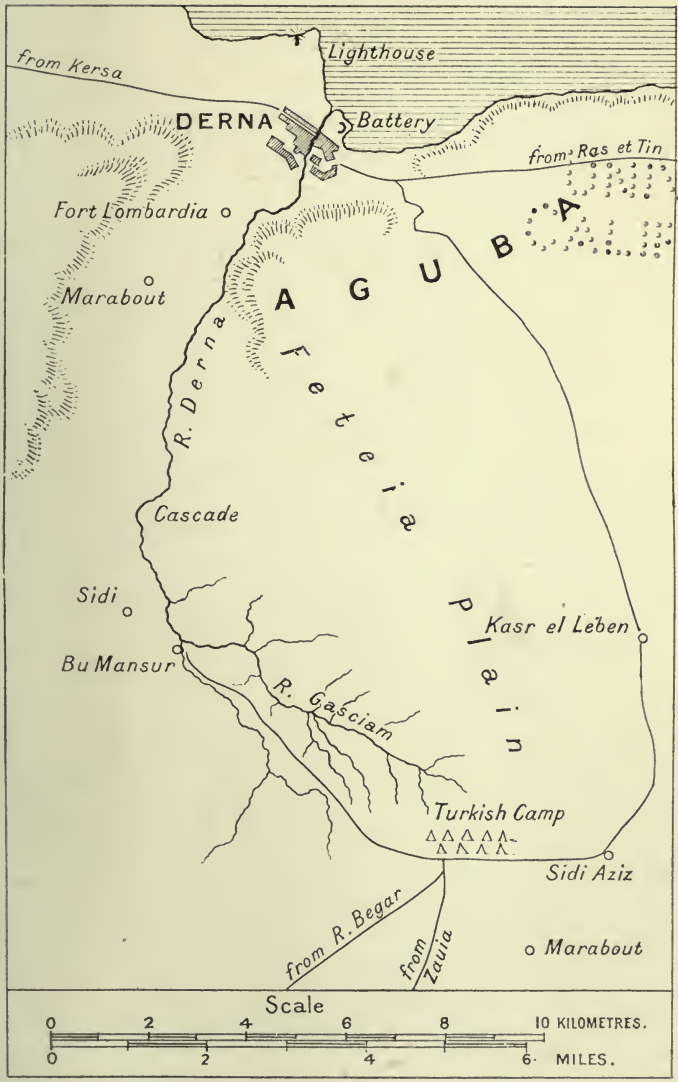
CHAPTER XXIII

THE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN CYRENAICA

WHILST in Tripoli at present all is quiet and safe, and work is being completed on the railway from the harbour to Ain-Zara, and whilst at Homs the Mergheb fortifications are being strengthened and the ground cleared of the enemy in all directions, and future operations prepared for in the interior, in Cyrenaica fighting is still in progress, both of an offensive and defensive nature.

Passing over the little outpost engagements of almost daily occurrence, the first attack in force on our entrenched positions at Derna on November 16 was successfully repulsed. This was followed by a second on the 24th, and a third of equal violence on December 7th, but both were repelled with like results and heavy loss to the enemy.

In the neighbourhood of Derna, the Turco-Arabs to the number of some 8,000 fighting men have their head-quarters about ten miles to the south.


from Kersa
Lighthouse
DERNA
Battery
from Ras et Tin
Fort Lombardia
Marabout
A G U B A
R. Derna
Feteia Plain
Cascade
Sidi
Kasr el Leben
Bu Mansur
R. Gasciam
Turkish Camp
Sidi Aziz
from R. Begar
from Zaula
Marabout
Scale
0 2 4 6 8 10 KILOMETRES.
0 2 4 6 MILES.

MAP OF DERNA

Their chief object is to prevent our erecting block-houses in the interior, and to dispute our tenure of the Wadi Derna, which supplies the town with water. They have succeeded several times in diverting the course of this stream, thus causing serious inconvenience to the town, in spite of the special tank-ships with which it is well provided. All the fighting round Derna centres on the possession of this river.

The chief Turkish attack on our fortified posts here was that of February 27. From earliest dawn to dusk the battle raged fiercely in, and around, the valley of Bu-Msafer, where important fortification works are in course of completion. It showed once more the sterling value of our troops, who were for a very long time exposed to a hostile fire. Seven battalions of infantry with six field pieces and four sections of quick-firers took part in it, and were opposed to about 7,000 Turco-Arabs supported by artillery.

It was the Arabs, as usual, that began the attack, but in apparently inconsiderable numbers. They tried the ordinary ruse of drawing us from our positions into an ambuscade concealed some distance off, and made every use of the inequalities of the ground, which, both among the treacherous sand-dunes of the Tripolitan desert and also here among the broad vales of Cyrenaica, lends itself so

readily to a trap of this kind. But here also the attempt was a failure, as, without quitting our position, we repulsed the enemy and forced him to fall back again up the opposite slope.

The real battle only began towards midday, when, as the last shots were being fired at the retreating enemy, the entire flanks of the hill in front of us were covered with masses of Turk and Arab soldiery, who repeated the attack of the previous day in full force. Their main body came into violent collision with the Lombardia Fort, which commands the valley. A simultaneous enveloping movement was attempted on both our flanks, but more especially the left, which was hotly attacked. On this side, however, it was repulsed with loss by one of our mountain batteries.

For some time a stubborn and fanatical resistance was offered to our murderous fire, and the gaps torn by our guns in their ranks were quickly filled up again. Whole rows of them, mown down by our machine-guns, seemed to rise again from the ground to renewed life, and for two hours the fight went on without our succeeding in forcing their serried ranks to yield an inch of the ground from which they continued to pour the rifle fire on our artillery.

But the roar of the guns went on all the same,

as rhythmical and precise as ever, and the officers' voices sounded sharp and clear through the hail of shot as they gave their orders to regulate the firing much as on a field day. Only for a few minutes did one of these grim cannon mouths cease to fire. Every single gunner had been wounded. Then up ran the lieutenant, and he aimed and fired shot after shot, beaming with satisfaction as he watched the little white cloud of shrapnel rise slowly and lightly over a knot of the enemy.

In order to break the obstinate Turkish resistance it was decided to make a counter-attack, which proved the most successful bayonet charge in all the campaign. Towards 3 o'clock the Edolo battalion of Alpini was ordered to charge. With a yell like the cry of some savage beast, the Alpini flung themselves on the enemy—a rushing avalanche of men. For a moment the Turks appeared to hold their ground in readiness to receive the onset, and with a terrible volley struck down the men who led the charge. Many fell wounded and were carried away by the all-compelling force of the stream that swept forward irresistibly. Under the clash of the Italian bayonets the enemy's front line wavered, as if smitten by the rush of air which the charge had driven onward, then broke and scattered in all directions, seized

with the customary scare which always overtakes the Arabs when the bayonets flash.

But the Turkish Regulars in the background, steadier and less impressionable, went on calmly firing at our men, who formed an easy target out in the open. Then the fury of the Alpini became irrepressible. The big, good-natured sons of the mountains, ruddy-faced and sturdy, whose smile is wont to be so kindly and whose glance is as the glance of a child, became for the nonce lost to all pity. Over the corpse-strewn slope they rushed to meet their long-sought foe, the Turk, and a deadly struggle commenced, hand to hand.

A captain in command of the Turks raised his sabre in the face of the foremost Alpini. He seemed struggling to say something which was unintelligible to them. Was it a rallying cry to encourage his men, or an appeal for mercy? Who knows? The irresistible shock swept on of its own impetus, and the dark mass of Turkish troops was swallowed up in the grey avalanche of the Alpini that bore all before it. The Turkish captain was among the first to fall, surrounded by a little heap of his men. It was but a few of the Turks that escaped this slaughter by flight. Just at this time three battalions under General Capello started an outflanking movement on the enemy's

right wing, driving it back in hasty retreat and thus deciding the day.

Enver Bey, the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish forces in Cyrenaica, was wounded in this battle. He was struck by a splinter from a shell whilst directing the battle, surrounded by his Staff on the summit of a hill. The Constantinople Government has repeatedly contradicted this because, as Enver Bey was the most capable Turkish Commander in Africa, the news might have caused profound discouragement throughout the Turkish Army. But it is certain that he was wounded in the battle of Derna on February 27, 1912. He attained distinction not merely as a leader, but also from his extraordinary cleverness in the dissemination of news favourable to his own cause, which turns all the Turkish defeats into great victories.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN THE CAPITAL OF CYRENAICA

A NEW life is pulsing now in Bengasi—a European life, which is effecting a complete metamorphosis of the town. Work is in progress on the landing-stages of the new harbour, which is already half complete; and on the great wall of circumvallation, destined to surround the city and make it possible to defend it with quite a small garrison, legions of Arab workmen are toiling with all the energy that their national statuesque dignity will permit.

The Arab seems to have been specially created to play the rôle of painter's model. He works with a maximum of noise and a minimum of effort. The removal of a tiny stone assumes in his hands the dignity of a ceremony. His work goes on under the superintendence of our soldiers, and hundreds of yards of wall have risen as by magic. Fresh streets are now open to traffic, and old ones have been transformed into fine European

thoroughfares under the heavy street-roller, dragged slowly along by disorderly gangs of Arabs, chanting verses from the Koran.

Traffic has increased tenfold during these seven months of Italian rule. Motor-vans, carrying supplies for the outposts, encounter caravans of camels laden with stones and mortar. Arab horsemen with gorgeous golden trappings, and quaint old vehicles that run as omnibuses between Bengasi and Berca, patched like the nether garments of a beggar, drawn by half-starved horses, and always full up, pass one another in all directions. Every half-hour, a long, shrill whistle announces an arrival by railway, and the lilliputian Decauville train steams fussily in, while the camels look down on it with sleepy, condescending eyes, and their drivers do not even deign to notice it at all, so indifferent are they to everything, whether it be train or motor, aeroplane or dirigible, which now for the first time cleave the blue African vault.

Our line of defence works at Bengasi has been carried, after many successful engagements of greater or less importance, four or five miles away from the town, and consists of a formidable network of blockhouses and redoubts. The enemy knows these works well. He has tested and tried them all; blockhouse by blockhouse, redoubt by

redoubt. He has done his utmost to destroy them and make his way between them, attacking them by night and day, in front, and on the flank; but, so far, he has only succeeded in leaving his dead there by the hundred. And now his daring has deserted him, and, in his discouragement, he begins to realise that Bengasi is lost to him for ever, like Tripoli and Homs, Derna and Tobruk.

There he waits and waits, fifteen miles away towards the east. From the tall minarets the Turkish Camp is plainly visible through the field-glass, 7,000 men strong. Between our outposts and the enemy's camp lies a little oasis, known as the oasis of the "Two Palms."

CHAPTER XXV

THE BATTLE OF THE "TWO PALMS"

(*March* 3, 1912)

THIS spot was the scene of a great battle on March 3, 1912. The Turks, who had recently seen our troops manœuvring in considerable force, egged on by the Bedouins to risk the chances of a fight, hoped to entice us beyond the circle of our outworks, and had laid an ambush for us in the "Two Palms" oasis, from which they were ready to fling an outflanking column of two or three thousand men round us, while a second column was prepared to fall on us on the extreme right. The centre was to be formed of the elusive Turkish Regulars, so clever at keeping in the background and escaping after each battle.

But General Ameglio and General Briccola got wind of this manœuvre in the oasis of the "Two Palms" to the east of the Wells of Foyat, and decided on a vigorous attack. The

troops who were to make it consisted of 7 battalions of infantry, 3 mountain and 2 field batteries, and a regiment of cavalry, commanded by General Ameglio. Our men were at once drawn up in battle order in a wide, stony plain, where there was no cover, right opposite the enemy's position, and advanced in open order under a perfect hurricane of shot. The artillery placed on our flanks began to pound away at the oasis and more distant masses of the enemy, who continued to advance and fire at us.

At the word "Forward!" the men, who lay resting on the sun-heated ground, sprang to their feet and advanced a few paces. This they did under a hail of bullets, until ordered to lie down. The enemy was still 600 yards off, and it was impossible to make straight for him without exposing ourselves to too heavy loss; so that we were obliged to move forward by fits and starts. A glittering trail of empty cartridge cases marked the spots where we had halted.

Meanwhile a regiment of cavalry moved out to protect our right flank, galloping across the plain and gradually disappearing in the distance in great clouds of dust, which the sun tipped with gold. From the height from which General Ameglio directed the battle a strong column of the enemy was seen approaching at about four

miles' distance. Thinking that the thick dust might prevent the cavalry noticing it, he dispatched a mounted officer to give them warning; and when Colonel Borsarelli, who was in command of them, became aware of the column's approach, he brought his men up to confront it.

They started off at a gallop and disappeared again in the dust, sweeping over the plain like a gust of the terrible "Ghebli," or desert wind, which lays low everything before it. Before the onward rush of our cavalry the enemy scattered, but with gazelle-like agility tried to make a rapid second attack from the south, to turn the cavalry and, if possible, cut it off. But Borsarelli made a swift change of front and charged them again, with the same result as before. Thus they were completely foiled in their attempts to get nearer and come to the aid of their comrades, who were now held fast in a ring of fire in the "Two Palms" oasis.

Our central advance had progressed, step by step, to within forty yards of the enemy's position, where they had entrenched themselves by the hundred in deep, rocky gullies, that had once been stone quarries, on the outside of the little oasis. Behind the brink of these gullies their heads kept popping up and down.

My battalion had heard the shouts of their

comrades, who had already started a bayonet charge on either side of the oasis, and were chafing with impatience to join in, when the bugle sounded the "Charge." We all rushed forward, yelling "Savoia!" We had the regimental colours in our midst, carried by Second Lieutenant Trani with a sergeant on either side. He is an active, beardless young fellow, hardly more than a boy.

When the signal sounded for attack he unfurled the flag which he had kept rolled up till then, and sprang swiftly to the front, where he held it proudly and stiffly aloft, fully conscious of the nobility of his mission. My Colonel, recalling later on the incidents of the fighting, said of him: "In times of danger that youngster displayed the imperturbability of a fakir." Throughout the battle the flag was always held upright, always well to the front.

It was a grand episode that followed. The Arabs had all massed together behind the near edge of the great pit; bullets were pelting from all sides on the rock, and had wounded several men. The young ensign was amongst the first to fall, and the blood from a wound in his head stained the Tricolour, which was at once seized by another officer. It was the last act of the grim drama.

There was no stopping the impetus of our onrush, and we swept headlong into the great pit of death like some grey torrent, all bristling with steel. The fray was short but fierce. Rifles were fired point-blank. The Arabs seized theirs by the barrel, using them as a bludgeon, neither giving nor asking quarter. They uttered not a sound, and in that life-and-death struggle nothing was heard but the panting of the Italians and their deep-breathed curses at each bayonet-stab.

It was but a moment, and, amid a wild chaos of struggling humanity, first one and then another fell staggering and measured his length on the ground. One Arab, stabbed through with the bayonet, had just strength enough left to fall on and bite the leg of the man who had wounded him. Another band of them made a last desperate effort to find a way of escape by leaping into the adjoining oasis.

The flapping of their long cloaks in this attempt was sudden as the flight of a flock of birds, but they were all shot down by our rifles. The burnous fell from one of the fugitives as he ran, and disclosed to view the uniform of a Turkish officer. He moved forward a few steps and fell on his knees, rising again to fall once more, but this time on his hands, and so he dragged himself over the rocks, where at last he lay motionless.

Another Turkish captain also received his death-blow in this hole of death. Out of 150 of them not a man escaped alive.

Three hours of mortal conflict passed before our victory was complete. In our part of the field the enemy had already beaten a hasty retreat towards the interior, leaving us masters of the ground. Their loss must have been very great. In the oasis of the "Two Palms" alone 400 dead were counted, all slain with the bayonet, whilst others were found scattered all over the field of battle. Certainly not less than 1,000 of their 6,000 men engaged were killed in this encounter. We had 3 officers and 25 of the rank and file killed, with 12 officers and 68 men wounded.

The Turkish Camp was in mourning for several weeks. Amid the wailing of women and the throb of the muffled drums, which accompanied the ceremonial prayers, the Arab chiefs assembled and reproached the Turks with having left their columns to die unaided. To calm their wrath the Turks were forced to distribute Li. 20,000,[1] promising to join them actively in a further immediate attack.

It would be a grand thing for us if they would at last really make up their minds to do so, but unfortunately it is pretty certain that they will still confine themselves to forcing the poor Arabs to

[1] The Turkish lira is worth twenty shillings.

THE ITALIAN FLAG FLYING OVER MERGHEB HILL, TAKEN BY ASSAULT

ITALIAN SOLDIERS RENDERING MILITARY HONOUR ON THE FIELD TO A TURKISH OFFICER—FALLEN AT THE BATTLE OF "TWO PALMS"

the front, while they wait at a convenient and safe distance in the background, ready to take to their heels the moment that victory decides against them. So it has been in each engagement, from the first moment of our landing up till now. And this innate tendency to run away in nowise corroborates the reputation for bravery that they have somehow fraudulently obtained.

Numerous were the examples of heroism shown by our troops in this battle also. Soldiers, sent out with dispatches, came panting and breathless back, in haste to resume their posts. There were instances of wounded men who refused to leave the fighting line to have their wounds attended to in the camp hospital,

Second Lieutenant Porta was wounded in both legs as he was leading his squad. He refused to be carried away, and, being unable to walk, dragged himself along on hands and knees, amongst the cheers of his men, whilst we were advancing on the infernal death-trap. He still tried to struggle on, but was struck by a ball in the chest. "It's nothing," he cried. "Go on!" When our men reached the Dantesque "Bolgia infernale" he flung himself in amongst the first, though fainting from loss of blood. A Bedouin sprang at him, but one of our men just stopped him in time with a bayonet stab through the chest.

One of my company, as we were just reaching the brink of the pit, sprang calmly up, chose a position of vantage terribly exposed, and started firing. "Where are you off to? Come here!" I shouted to him. "Why, I can see better here, sir," he answered. "I'll just give them a shot or two and then fall back into line." A minute or two more, and he received his death-wound in the head. He was a reservist, with a wife and children at home.

This is just a typical example and no exceptional case. Our men are built that way. The humble Italian workman who enriches proud continents with his unassuming toil, who lays the railways all the world over—the sturdy, universally recognised promoter of civilisation—has at last become conscious within himself of a warlike courage and the conquering temperament of his ancestors.

A sergeant, hit in the shoulder, had his tunic stained with blood. A soldier calls out to him: "You're wounded, sergeant!" "Don't you worry; that's nothing. Come along, lads!" And two minutes afterwards, in that terrible death-struggle in the pit, an Arab runs him through the throat with a rusty bayonet, tied roughly to his gun-barrel with a piece of string. He is Sergeant Umberto Banchelli, of Florence, who, after vainly asking leave to go out to the war, took advantage

of a short furlough and started off at his own expense for Bengasi, which, after many difficulties, he contrived to reach.

His mother, being aware of his intentions, sent the following telegram to General Briccola, Governor of Cyrenaica: "My son, an N.C.O., taking advantage short furlough, has gone Bengasi hoping to fight. Kindly permit him, without punishment. Am glad my only son has hastened to join those who fight for Italy and Christian civilisation. God bless and protect him, and with him all comrades-in-arms."

My orderly, Alfredo Lolli, who never once left my side through all the fighting, when we found ourselves on one occasion without cover persisted in trying to shield me with his body. A shot struck him in the head close to the ear, passed clean through his mouth and came out at the nape of his neck, a horrible mortal wound which, nevertheless, failed to damp the faithful fellow's courage, for, though his face was covered with blood, he stood by me to the last.

This victory on March 3 at Bengasi caused the enemy to retire still farther into the interior, and convinced them of the hopelessness of attacking our positions with success. And as they have always been defeated at Tobruk as well, and driven farther and farther from the sea, one may assert

from a military point of view that, even if peace does not come to cut short the war, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica are henceforth practically lost to Turkey and assured to Italian rule. The Turks and Arabs will only be able now to carry on a guerilla war, which may possibly harass our troops and disturb our finances, but can never restore to Turkey these two provinces which she has lost for good and all.[1]

[1] An English journalist with the Turks wired the Turkish defeat as a great victory, also stating the death of General Ameglio (*sic*)! who, by the way, after this new victory, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General for conspicuous bravery in the field.

CHAPTER XXVI

AMEGLIO, THE HERO OF BENGASI

Such officers do the King best services.
SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet.*

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL AMEGLIO, who was in command at the battle of the Two Palms on March 3, 1912, has greatly distinguished himself throughout this war, from the day when, at our first landing, he took Bengasi by storm, despite the stubborn defence of the Turks and Arabs, who mustered there in great force. He is a born leader, with all the large-hearted communicative exuberance of the Sicilians in his blood, but at the same time never so calm as in the heat of battle, when his sun-tanned face, set off by a moustache of snowy whiteness, assumes a stern impassiveness, and his bright eyes become hard and piercing. He speaks in measured tones, and only to issue orders to his aides-de-camp.

Stiff and erect in the saddle, he exposes himself with the greatest calmness throughout the fighting, but insists on his orderlies keeping under cover,

permitting no unnecessary risks. "It is I, not you," he says, "who must see all that goes on. It will be time enough for you to expose yourselves when the necessity arises." The men worship him. These men were under his leadership in the first rush of the landing at Giuliana, in the heat of the first successful onslaught, and also later on, whenever the trenches were pushed forward and new ground won. They have seen him standing amongst them, while the battle surged around, and fight in full and complete reliance on their General. "If Ameglio gives the order, it must be all right —come on!" He knows how to instil into his men the confidence and assurance which he himself possesses as their leader. His power of leading others is wonderful. The men trust him implicitly, give themselves up to his guidance and follow him to the death.

It was a revelation to see the enthusiasm with which they greeted him after the great battle at Bengasi. They stood for a moment stiffly at the salute, and then their enthusiasm burst through all the bonds of discipline; they waved their rifles frantically in the air, with the blood-stained bayonets still fixed, and broke into one tremendous shout that rang across the field of victory. "Long live Ameglio! Hurrah for our General!" Even the wounded, writhing in agonies on their

stretchers, smiled as they tried to raise their hands to the salute.

The General graciously acknowledged the honour shown to him. He pulled up his horse again and again at the men's hurrahs, and in manly, soldierly tones addressed his "lads," as he affectionately styled them; but the tears stood in his kindly eyes as the proud, solemn words passed from his lips.

The Italian Parliament, in a full sitting, passed a special vote of thanks to the gallant General, and the King of his own accord promoted him to the Lieutenant-Generalship for special merit in war. Of these honours Ameglio proved himself worthy by soon afterwards again distinguishing himself in Rhodes, where, at the head of the Italian Expedition charged with the occupation of that important island of the Ægean, he defeated in a great battle near Peithos, not a savage mass of Turco-Arabs as in Cyrenaica, but a well-trained Turkish force of Regulars placed there for the island's defence.

The victory then gained by Ameglio on May 16, 1912, which was followed by the surrender of 1,500 Turks, is the last convincing proof of the superiority of our Army over the Turkish, and of the General's strategic ability. "Wide in its conception, broad in its execution, and far-reaching in its results, as such we may describe this his

last brilliant military success." So said an officer to me, who had been engaged in the battle of Psithos amongst the mountains of Rhodes. No comment, I think, could be truer, no praise better deserved. Ameglio is the most unassuming of men. Shortly before he returned to Rhodes from Psithos, a smart carriage and pair, decked with flowers by the ladies of the town, drove up towards the marching troops, intended for the use of the General. Ameglio expressed his thanks for their kind thought, but refused to enter it, preferring to ride back at the head of his troops and the 1,500 Turkish prisoners. He passed through a great crowd of applauding people who rained flowers on his men; and when they followed him to his house, raising cheer after cheer, he came out on the balcony and briefly addressed them as follows: "Nothing happens but God wills it. No thanks are due to me for the victory won, but to Him and these brave soldiers of mine, who have exceeded my utmost expectations. We have defeated the enemy and taken them prisoners. Henceforth we shall be able with greater tranquillity to take steps for the well-being of this people. Viva l'Italia! Viva Savoia!"

"Viva l'Italia! Viva Savoia! Viva Ameglio!" shouted the Rhodians in return, though but a few days before they had been Turkish subjects.

Against this man also the Turks have suborned assassins, as they did at Tripoli against Jean Carrère of the *Temps* of Paris.

General Ameglio was riding, a few days after the landing on Rhodes, accompanied by his aide-de-camp and four privates, to rejoin the main body of his troops. As he was passing through a small village two rifle-shots were fired at him. By a miracle he remained unhurt, and caused the would-be assassins to be followed in their flight. They were arrested and brought before him, but turned out to be no Turkish soldiers, but two common assassins in the pay of the Young Turks. They flung themselves on their knees before him, entreating his forgiveness; but Ameglio ordered them to be shot then and there, exclaiming: "This is the treatment that all brigands deserve!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ITALIAN SOLDIER

THE Turco-Italian War has once more shown up the utter unpreparedness and inefficiency of the Turkish Fleet and Army, and confirmed the Ottoman soldier's traditional reputation for brutality. The atrocities committed on Italian prisoners, dead and wounded, have placed the Turkish Army outside the pale of civilisation. Italy, on the other hand, has proved to an astonished world that she deserves to rank as a first-rate Power, on land and sea as well as in the air. In the air, because, for the first time in the history of warfare, she has made effective use, for both offensive and defensive purposes, of a considerable number of aeroplanes and dirigibles, piloted by a well-trained and courageous body of officers. By sea, because naval critics, from England onwards, have admired the rapidity of the mobilisation of her Fleet, the excellence of the crews and of the artillery, the cleverness of

the gunners, and the capacity of the ships and their equipment to stand the wear and tear of war, with surprising results. And lastly on land, because the Italian troops have invariably proved victorious and shown a staying power, a discipline, and a patriotic dash admirable of their kind.

I leave it to three most capable war correspondents to appraise the merits of the Italian soldier. Bennett Burleigh, war correspondent from Tripoli for *The Daily Telegraph*, writes on November 22:

"Those dear fellows, always bright and cheerful, never show the least sign of laziness or fatigue. With the very elementary materials at their disposal they are building impregnable entrenchments, so cleverly and solidly constructed that behind them not only are the soldiers out of danger, but they are also protected against the inclemency of the weather, while at the same time they are able to thus enjoy a certain degree of comfort. These trenches are practically bullet-proof casemates. The defensive works of Tripoli, which extend for many miles, are protected by wire-work entanglements, and could sustain any assault and resist any siege. No attacking force which did not exceed six or eight times the number of the defenders could ever hope to penetrate the lines. The work done by the Italian soldiers is not only praiseworthy, but absolutely marvellous. And

we must not overlook the fact that the Italian soldiers work day and night without sparing themselves, and that they are not mercenary troops, but are mere conscripts who are bound to fight. Looking at these great works of defence, one forcibly realises that the ancient Roman strength and effectiveness are not dead, but are flourishing anon in modern Italy wakened from her long slumber."

Gaston Leroux, in a telegram to the *Matin* of Paris dated November 26, sounding the praises of the "Italian Grey-coats," says:

"From what I have seen hitherto I am convinced that the Italians have on their side one of the most powerful factors of victory in that calm and balanced courage which forms the noblest part of warlike daring. Quietly, without either confusion or swagger, the grey-clad Italian soldiers defy the enemy's fire, with the same calmness when extended in loose order over the boundless open plain as in the shelter of their trenches. I would gladly telegraph to you at length, quoting instances of heroism which I myself have witnessed, and which would be sufficient to convince any one of the great bravery and capacity of this splendid Army. The men march readily into action without nonsense, noise, or exclamations of any sort; they take up their positions with coolness, and construct in a few minutes trenches of wonderful impregnability, behind which they calmly fight.

Their coolness under fire is beyond all praise. I have repeatedly seen shrapnels bursting right in the thick of a battalion without a single man flinching, just as though nothing had happened. It is impossible to deny that this is something out of the common."

Lastly, the Russian correspondent of the *Novoe Vremya* sent the following remarks, concerning the Italian officers and men, from Tripoli to St. Petersburg:

"The more one knows of the Italian Army and its constitution, the more one is filled with esteem for its officers and appreciation of its rank and file. In my previous letters I have already expressed my enthusiasm for the officers' high morality, great sobriety, and simple-heartedness. With plenty of self-respect, as becomes an officer, they are absolutely free from any arrogance or self-assertion. They treat their young subordinate brothers-in-arms without the least trace of 'side,' even allowing them some amount of freedom in their behaviour towards their superiors; but this in no wise prevents them adopting, when necessary, the most rigorous measures.

"In the matter of subordination and military discipline the Italians are scrupulous to a marked degree, and allow no liberties to be taken. Never, even from the youngest subalterns, have I heard any criticism of those in command. The Italian

rank and file, like their officers, produce a favourable impression by their training, smartness, and intelligence. They all have some education, and can both read and write, enter readily and keenly into conversation, read the papers, are interested in all that goes on, and of a ready wit. Having already served in several engagements with marked success, they are fast becoming first-rate fighting-men, worthy of their sires and grandsires who fought with Garibaldi. Talking of their wit reminds me of an incident which I cannot recall without a smile. On one occasion a colleague of mine, who invariably changed colour when he heard the rifles crack, kept saying to soldiers as he passed them, 'Courage, friend!' Some answered with a smile; others thanked him; and finally one of them roundly replied with 'Courage, press!' My companion blushed; he has left off encouraging them since!"

In such ways the Italian soldiers betray their racial characteristics. For long weeks they have remained in the trenches, exposed to rain and cold and the daily treachery of invisible, fanatical, and ferocious enemies, but still keep smiling, always cheery, every ready. The Ghebli of the desert has swollen their eyelids and scorched their cheeks, and yet they show no signs of weariness. The cholera has come and wrought havoc among their ranks, the Wadi Megenin has broken down

their trenches, constructed with such devoted care, and swept away their tents and all the little odds and ends so dear to them, and they have never even cursed their luck. After the battle is over they return to their posts light-heartedly singing the old songs of home; and one hides in his trousers pocket a bleeding hand, while another presses his dusty tunic tightly over a wound that he refuses to acknowledge, lest he should be prevented from taking part in the next fight. So do they prove themselves worthy of the best traditions of their grandsires who fought with Garibaldi the immortal; so do they add another page of glory to the already glorious history of their Fatherland.

Such is the Italian soldier in war time. What he is at home has been told to the English public by the well-known writer, Mr. Richard Bagot, with that competence gained by him after having spent many years in Italy studying Italian life. In his recent book, "The Italians of To-day," in a chapter devoted to the Italian soldier, he says:

"The conditions of military life in Italy have been steadily improving under the reign of the present Sovereign. As Prince of Naples, King Victor made himself thoroughly acquainted with every detail of the soldier's life, and in the

ameliorations which have taken place in that life since he ascended the throne [July 20, 1900] his influence may in all probability be traced. His keen interest in everything to do with the Army is unflagging, and it is said that nothing escapes his eye.

"It is considered incumbent on any man wearing the King's uniform to render aid whenever and wherever it may be needed for the protection of life and property and for the repression of crime. In cases, too, of disasters, owing to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and other causes, the troops are the first to bring assistance and encouragement to the sufferers, with patience and good temper worthy of all praise.

"The fine horsemanship of the Italian cavalry is now recognised all over Europe; while Europe, too, has lately been compelled to recognise the consummate marksmanship of the riflemen and the artillery. Often the Italian soldiers are magnificent specimens of humanity, and, as a rule, exceedingly comely of feature as well. To see an Italian soldier drunk, or in any way misconducting himself in a public place, is exceedingly rare—so rare, indeed, that it would leave an extremely disagreeable impression on the witnesses."

With sailors and soldiers of this stamp Italy is fully justified in looking forward with confident

assurance to a yet grander future, in spite of all the croakings of unlooked-for envious critics, who know nothing of the great resources which the "New Italy" has in reserve. God bless you, noble souls, who have laid down your life for your country! Well and nobly have you upheld the national renown. You have won a name and éclat that will go down through the ages! You have shown the world the material of which the Italian soldier is made. God bless you! Join hands and rally round, great-hearted heroes of proud or lowly lineage, join hands and rally round your forefathers beyond the grave. What greetings shall be yours from those who died at Lepanto,[1] at St. Martino,[2] and Calatafimi?[3] Schiaffino the giant, who died with the banner of "The Mille" in his grip, how will he welcome the little fusiliers of the 84th Regiment that won the green banner of the Prophet? And you, Bianco, sacred first-fruit of the War, and sailors all who perished in the hour of triumph on the sands of Africa, go; take ye consolation to the vanquished who fell at Lissa. And you, stout-

[1] In 1571 the Turks were defeated on the sea by the Italians and Spaniards under the command of Don John of Austria.

[2] The great battle of St. Martino (June 24, 1859), where the Austrians were defeated by the Italians.

[3] Calatafimi, a town in Sicily, where Garibaldi, with his Thousand, defeated a great army of the Bourbons (May 14, 1860).

hearted Verri, who fell, leading in gallant counter-charge your sailor-lads still in their teens, go to that lonely grave upon Caprera's isle, go tell the story to Giuseppe Garibaldi! Haply the old hero will re-echo your cry, "On, Garibaldians of the Sea!"

CONCLUSION

When the war first broke out in September, 1911, people in Europe for the most part thought that the conquest of Tripolitania would be a sort of military walk-over for the Italian troops. Not so the Italian Staff, who, foreseeing that the Arabs would join the Turks in the defence of the Tripolitan vilayet, had made every preparation for facing a long campaign. The Turks' flight from every locality which the Italians attacked contributed greatly to the prolongation of hostilities. This also the staff had anticipated, and the original plan of invasion, thought out and decided on at Rome, was to make a simultaneous attack on Tripoli with the Fleet from the sea and with troops landed both on the east and on the west, to cut off the enemy's retreat from the town. Unfortunately it was impossible to carry this into effect, and the Turks, who are such masters in the art of running away, succeeded in taking refuge in the interior, and stirring up to a kind of holy war the majority of the native tribesmen.

For this reason the campaign is likely to prove of long duration, as, for the matter of that, all the Colonial wars in Africa have been.

Englishmen who naïvely wonder at the slowness of our military progress in Tripolitania, though the war has lasted but a few months, would alter their views if they recall that after many years of Lord Kitchener's control in Egypt, the desultory native warfare is still liable to recur, and that, each time the English attempt to push on into the interior, conflicts arise which at times cause serious loss to the invaders, as happened on March 15, 1912, to the reconnoitring expedition in the direction of the Oboz River, which was attacked by the natives and left six officers and forty men on the field of battle.

The opposition of the Turks and Arabs to the Italian occupation of Tripoli would speedily be at an end if the trade in contraband of war were effectually stopped on the Tunisian and Egyptian frontiers, by means of which our enemies receive fresh supplies of arms, ammunition, and provisions. But however obstinate and fanatical the Turco-Arabian resistance may prove, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica must from this time forward be considered lost to Turkey irreparably.

The later phases of the war may develop more or less disastrously for the Turkish Army and

Fleet, but they cannot possibly assume any other complexion than the present; they cannot, that is to say, secure for Turkey the mastery either on land or sea, nor even in the air. The Italians are strongly fortified at all the more important points along the coast, and at some places in the interior where military exigencies demand it. It would be madness to act with undue haste and pursue the enemy through the desert into which he has retreated. The points occupied by Italy command the country, and no force which the Turks can bring to bear can oust her from them. The advance into the hinterland will take place by degrees, as soon as the present season of drought permits, and when the chief tactical necessities have been provided for, more especially the construction of railway lines and the establishment of new bases of war supplies at such points as the Staff shall consider desirable for facilitating the inward movement. The Colonial wars of England and France have taught Italy to take things slowly, if she wishes to assure her final triumph without grave and useless loss of life. All too many sacrifices have already been made to secure this conquest.

Professor Schweinfurth, the eminent German explorer who knows every inch of Tripolitania and has studied well the Arabs of that part of

Africa, in the *Impartial* of Cairo approves unconditionally of the defensive tactics adopted by the Italian Expeditionary Force in Tripolitania. He reminds us that "eighty years ago, at the time of the conquest of Algeria, the French found themselves strategically in a much more advantagous position than the Italians are at present in Tripoli, as they were fighting in a country in which supplies were abundant, and in which their Army was practically free. Theirs was not a campaign against the desert as is the war in Tripoli, where the scarcity of water hinders the advance, and where the Italians are faced with enormous difficulties in the way of transport—the camel supply being limited. The French during the first ten years of their occupation of Algiers were not masters of more conquered territory than the Italians at the present moment in Tripoli."

According to Schweinfurth, a forward march of the Italians into the interior is not only unnecessary, but would be useless and perhaps even fraught with many dangers. "In order to march into the hinterland," he declares, "a railway, flanked every seven miles by block-houses, would have to be constructed. Italy now occupies Tripoli, Zanzur, Bu-kameck, Homs, Misrata, Bengasi, Derna, and Tobruk—that is to say

all the principal places on the coast. Let her fortify them and wait patiently. Eventually the tribes from the interior will come and submit to their new masters when they realise that famine is at the door, as they are sure to be overtaken by that formidable scourge. Italy must wait and be patient; colonial wars are never of short duration."

But why, in these circumstances, does Turkey continue to resist, when she has no reasonable hope of success? Because she is under the delusion that European rivalries may play her game for her, for no other reason. Yet it is obvious that this passive resistance will cease the moment that Italy attacks some vital point of the Ottoman Empire.

The scene of war is already shifting, contrary to Italy's desire, from Africa eastward. On November 17 Italian warships bombarded Akaba and Hodeida, two important Turkish positions on the coast of the Red Sea, and destroyed seven Turkish gunboats off Kunfida on January 7, 1912. A few weeks later Turkey refused to accept the mediation of the neutral Powers, and Italy was forced to naval action in the Ægean also, destroying two Turkish cruisers in the harbour of Beirut on February 23, 1912, and bombarding certain forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles. About the end of May thirteen islands in the

Ægæan, of which Rhodes was the chief, were occupied.

On May 4, 1912, General Ameglio landed on the island of Rhodes with the Italian troops, in spite of the resistance offered by 2,000 Turkish regulars supported by artillery, as well as by hundreds of criminals liberated from the prisons and armed on condition that they helped to resist the Italian invasion. On the following day the Italian flag was flying over the Castle of Rhodes—the Turks having fled to the mountains, as is their wont, with the intention of keeping up a troublesome guerilla warfare in the district of Psithos, some six hours' march from Rhodes. General Ameglio, however, knew better, and on the night of May 15 he suddenly sent three columns against the Turkish positions. Two of these columns were landed, during the night, a few miles east of Psithos, an extremely difficult manœuvre owing to darkness and the perilous cliffs and rocks which abound in those waters. The following morning the Ottoman troops were suddenly attacked, and practically surrounded by the Italians. A parliamentary was sent by the Turks to General Ameglio, proposing to surrender, which offer was accepted. The prisoners taken totalled 40 officers, including the Turkish commander of Rhodes, and 1,300 non-commissioned officers and men.

The Italians also took 6 guns, 1,000 rifles, 200 cases of ammunition, horses, camp-equipments, and a great quantity of stores and supplies. Thus, when finally the Turks had the "*long-wished-for opportunity of fighting with the Italians on European soil*" and showing their boasted valour, all they did was ignominiously to lay down their arms. After the battle of Psithos the world realises that the desperate defence in Tripoli against the Italian occupation is entirely due to the religious fanaticism of the Arabian tribes, goaded on by their pastmasters the Turks.

It is difficult to guess at the intentions of the Italian Staff for the future, but one may rest assured that, if Turkey persists in her resistance, Italy will find means to follow up her victorious progress to still more vital points. It must be admitted that the Italian Fleet is in capable and daring hands; nor is it by any means certain that the forts on the Dardanelles would prove equal to resisting a sudden attack by sea on Constantinople. Meanwhile in Albania and Macedonia the population is beginning to rebel against the Turkish yoke, and in Asia Minor a serious revolt, led by the Sheikh Idris, keeps an army of some 40,000 men fully occupied. The position of Turkey is an extremely awkward one. To the continued Italian successes the Porte replies with reprisals which

affect all the Powers, arbitrarily closing the Dardanelles to shipping, or brutally expelling in a body all Italians from the Ottoman dominions. But this will not alter by one hair's breadth the course adopted by Italy, nor damp the great enthusiasm of her people as a whole for the war. Never was a sovereign more beloved by his subjects than is the King of Italy to-day. Some people would have us believe that Italian finance cannot much longer support the strain of the conflict, but this is a mistake. Though the war may be costing Italy as much as £40,000 a day, Signor Tedesco, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, quite recently has officially stated that the coffers of State contain a sum amply sufficient to carry on hostilities for another ten months at least, without having recourse to any loan.

The Italian Exchequer could bear the expenses of this war, even if it lasted for some years. In fact, the Italian Exchequer, during the period from 1898 to the present date, after satisfying all requirements of State, whether ordinary or extraordinary, shows a total surplus of £28,800,000, or an average of £2,040,000 for each financial year. This surplus has been obtained without any additional taxes, several having, on the contrary, been considerably reduced, and in spite of an increase of £25,000,000 in the actual State expenses. This

satisfactory condition of the Italian finances attains a still greater value and significance from the two-fold fact that the Treasury has not, up to the present, drawn on any loan which it is at liberty to raise from other sources, and has also at its disposal still more than £4,000,000 in Treasury bonds, which it can issue at any moment, as well as 3,000,000 pounds of bullion in reserve. If Turkey, which is unable to find credit for the raising of a sorely needed loan of £2,000,000 in Europe, would give serious attention to these figures, she would no doubt soon come to wiser decisions and surrender.

As long ago as November 5, 1911, Italy proclaimed her absolute sovereignty over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica; and as the military position in these two provinces is to-day such that any suzerainty on the part of Turkey is quite out of the question, the recognition of the Italian rule by the latter country, as well as by the great European Powers, is the only solution which can be accepted, and is a *sine qua non* of any negotiations for peace. In short, a country which, like Turkey, has ceased to be in touch with a part of its dominions, and is unable to restore its relations with them in any way, because it is incapable not only of dominating the sea, whereby alone they can be reached, but even of attempting to oppose its enemy's fleet, has no right to talk of sovereignty or oppose the proclamation

of the control of these districts by Italy, now that she has broken off once and for all any communication between the African vilayet and the Ottoman Government, and strongly occupied every vital point along the Tripolitan coast, from which her opponent's forces have shown themselves absolutely unable to expel her. Such is the actual position in which matters stand to-day.

There is still a Turkish Army in the field in Tripolitania, but it is an army without resources, completely incapable of retaking the positions which it formerly occupied, and utterly incapable of altering in any way the issue of the war. Such is the predicament in which Turkey finds herself with relation to Italy and the Neutral Powers. And the latter, keenly alive to the danger which, owing to the present war, is threatening the peace of Europe, are doing their utmost to urge the Sublime Porte to yield to the pressure of events, which no prolongation of the war will succeed in altering.

The Productive Value of Tripoli

Much has been said and written in England to the effect that Italy has undertaken a costly and difficult war for the possession of a barren desert. The inference is a mistaken one. The acquisition of Tripolitania by Italy not merely offers to her the

sole means of escaping the serious danger of finding the Mediterranean closed to her by other Powers, but also secures her the possession of a vast country, three times the size of the Italian peninsula, already fertile in part, and capable of becoming so throughout a large portion of the remainder. Moreover, the Tripolitan territory shows promise also of considerable mineral wealth. The extent of the ground capable of cultivation in the two African provinces is far greater than is commonly supposed; and as agriculture is quite possible on light lands on which less than nine inches of rain falls, the soil of Tripolitania, with an average rainfall of six inches, will lend itself admirably to the cultivation of the olive and other trees which have been raised so successfully by the French in Tunisia. A fact which should have made those people who are so ready to offer their opinion, without any real knowledge of the subject, pause and reflect, is the abundance of ancient ruins.

To explain the contrast between the prosperity of old and the decadence of to-day, it is usually urged that there must have been a change in the Mediterranean climate. But this is quite a gratuitous supposition. The causes of the great change are elsewhere to seek. Historians have not sufficiently dwelt on the fact that, if the Arab invasion was a great political and religious

revolution, it was also an agricultural revolution of very far-reaching consequences. The men of old were perfectly cognisant of the fact that the cultivation of trees is pre-eminently possible in countries where the rainfall is deficient. They knew, as the old historians, Arab and otherwise, inform us, that the whole country, from the far east of Perisa away to Morocco on the west, was once covered with orchards. For this highly developed cultivation the Arabs substituted a much more primitive one. In a climate where rain is scarce it is necessary to make one's choice between grass and trees, as there is insufficient moisture for the sustenance of both. The Arabs, being a pastoral people, sacrificed the trees, systematically destroying them or allowing them to perish. Thus the orchards were by slow degrees superseded by poor pastures, and districts which had previously supported large and flourishing populations were afterwards only inhabited by nomad tribes. In the course of centuries one half of Asia and Africa underwent a change, and the desolation which we see to-day gradually took the place of the cultivated trees of yore. Italians will have to restore once more the ancient state of the land and return to the intelligent cultivation of trees and corn, neglected by the Arabs, as the French are doing in Algeria and Tunisia

Such is the new colony which Italy has won, and millions of her sons, whose farming capacities are of the highest, and who now seek for work in Tunisia, America, and throughout the world in foreign lands, ill paid and often unappreciated, will henceforth find it in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to the great benefit of themselves and their country.

The Italians are returning to-day to this land which belonged to them of old, and in which their glorious ancestors have left many traces of civilisation and greatness that even the Arabs and the Turks have never been able to efface. In the eyes of the Italians themselves this return was theirs by right, in the eyes of Europe it was but their duty. Civilisation can only profit by it,—and Italy, the world's great proletariat; Italy, the simple-hearted, the laborious, more used to suffer than enjoy; Italy, the redeemed of barely fifty years, steps down to-day into the arena, fit and ready to become in her own good time the redeemer of other lands and other peoples!

Italia, Italia,
sacra alla nuova aurora
con l'aratro e la prora!

G. D'Annunzio, *La Canzone d'Oltremare.*

(Italy, my Italy!
hallowed to the new dawn, thou,
with thy plough-share and thy prow!)

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